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**EMPOWERING DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS
TO PERFORM BETTER AT A TERTIARY
INSTITUTION: AN ASSESSMENT**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of
Master of Business Science (Industrial Psychology), in the Faculty of
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Ladan Eshraghi

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade the racial composition of the student body at University of Cape Town (UCT) has changed to a great extent. More than ever the number of black students seeking tertiary education at UCT has increased. The majority of this student population's academic experience has been in schools run by the former Department of Education and Training (DET). Many of the black students from such disadvantaged educational backgrounds obtain very poor academic results at UCT, even though the institution has put into place empowering mechanisms to address the needs of this specific group of students. The purpose of the study was to assess the structural empowerment mechanisms at UCT, in order to know to what degree UCT has been able to successfully empower its black students to achieve academic success. To achieve this purpose, a framework was adapted for the South African context, which examined four specific areas of concern. They were the institution's belief system, which included its vision, goals and culture; the role structure available to students, from which to learn new skills and become active participants in the institution; the support system, which included both formal and informal systems, with an emphasis on peer-based support; and finally, the leadership at the institution.

Sixteen black male students from the Faculty of Commerce at UCT participated in the study. In-depth interviews were conducted to gain a deep understanding of the issues. A questionnaire was administered, which elicited demographic information. In addition, information was obtained regarding students' perceptions of the institution, values assigned to various existing support structures, and the degrees of stress experienced with regard to various aspects of university life.

The results indicated that UCT's existing role structure made a positive contribution to black student empowerment, whereas the institution's belief system and leadership were ineffective as empowering mechanisms. The support structures met the needs of only half the sample, indicating that the support mechanisms could be more tailored to meet the needs of the black student population. Implications of the results, and recommendations for more effective empowering mechanisms are presented.

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NOTE ON RACIAL CLASSIFICATION

The study uses the terms “black” and “white”. In this study the term “black” refers specifically to people of African descent, and excludes people from Asian heritage (Indians) and from mixed heritage (classified as “Coloured”). Although such terminology may be offensive to readers and the participants in the study, it must be clarified that the researcher does not accept or wish to promulgate such politically constructed categories of identity. Such terminology emerged in the context of apartheid in South Africa, and was politically and socially motivated. Racial classification is used in this study to gain a deeper understanding of the consequences of and remedies for the challenges created by the system of apartheid. Hopefully, the study will be one step forward in the process of healing the past.

NOTE ON THE USE OF THE NAME UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Permission has been obtained from the University of Cape Town to disclose the fact that the study was conducted at this institution, and that reference will be made to its name. In most instances the abbreviation UCT will be used to refer to the University of Cape Town.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter one attempts to give a background to the study, the reasons for choosing this area of study, and its implications for South African public and private enterprises. The purpose and the importance of the study are explained and the framework used is introduced. Thereafter a brief explanation is given of the various support structures of the University of Cape Town (UCT) for students in general, and specifically for students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds. Subsequently, other research in the field is briefly examined, before clarifications are made regarding the concept of empowerment used for this study. Finally, note is made regarding the difference between objective and subjective reality, which is based on peoples' perceptions, and its ramifications for this study.

In chapter two, a comprehensive literature review on the definitions, and the dynamics of empowerment are covered. The concept of empowerment is further examined at the individual level and at the community and organizational levels. Finally, the definition and framework of empowerment used for this study are presented in detail.

Chapter three outlines the methodology of the research. The research design, and reasons and implications of such design are presented. Moreover the instrument used for the research, and its adaptations to suit the South African context are discussed, after which ethical considerations are presented. This chapter also addresses the issues of sample selection with its inherent limitations, before the methods of data analysis are presented.

In chapter four the results of the study are presented in two sections. The first section examines the results in the context of the framework used. For the sake of simplicity, the results appear under the same headings as in the framework. In the latter section,

emerging themes that pertain to the South African and UCT contexts are discussed. Pertinent figures of statistical findings are also presented.

✧ In chapter five the results of the study are discussed in context of the framework, and scholarly findings of other studies. Again, for the sake of simplicity, they are discussed under the headings that appear in the framework. Chapter six presents the conclusion and recommendations, followed by the limitations of the study, and areas for possible future research.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The black population in South Africa is about eight times that of the coloured population, and about seven times the white population (Forgey et al. 1999). Since the change in government in 1994, many more black South Africans are attempting to obtain tertiary qualifications, hoping to learn the necessary skills and knowledge that would enable them to make positive headways in the job market. However, the adjustments to university culture and academic demands have not been without their challenges.

✧ In 1995 a pilot study was published about non-classroom factors affecting academic performance at UCT (Hall, Rex & Sutherland). It examined the students' interaction with the institution, with the staff, and their patterns of social, and academic behaviour. One of the significant findings was that black students were struggling academically at this institution and were obtaining poor academic results. Many of the black students, who now represent the largest section of the student population at the institution, come from a disadvantaged educational system, and thus, struggle when faced with the challenging pace and academic material at the institution. The only access to education for many of the black students at UCT was from the former Department of Education and Training (DET), which provided very poor education. Classes were crowded, teachers were scarce, and materials such as textbooks were at times non-existent. Moreover, for many of them English was not their mother tongue, but is the medium used at the university. Of course, some of the factors for poor academic results are beyond the control of the institution,

such as coming from disadvantaged educational backgrounds, not being proficient in the English language, parents with lower levels of education, and the intra psychological factors that can motivate students to do well. But other factors that affect academic achievement are well within the power of the institution. These factors will be examined using a framework developed by Maton and Salem (1995) in order to specifically focus on UCT's culture and values, its role structure, its support system, and its leadership.

1.3 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The research question of this study is "to what degree is UCT successfully empowering black students to do well academically at the institution". This research question is important, for several reasons.

Firstly, it can assist the institution to assess its empowering mechanisms for black students, and to make changes where necessary. Such systems require a great deal of planning, time, financial resources, and expertise from professionals. Assisting with such a process is worthwhile.

Secondly, if black students become empowered as a result of successful mechanisms, they will have a better chance of inspiring other black students to follow in their footsteps, and in essence be role models, either as students or as members of staff. In 1998 only 14.4 percent of the professional staff at universities in South Africa were black, compared to 78.4 percent who were white (Forgey et al., 1999). This fact has serious implications. Black students are deprived of black teachers who could play the important role of mentor or role model. Moreover, the lack of sufficient black professionals at tertiary institutions means that there is less chance of being able to successfully address the social and academic needs of black students from their own perspectives. Most of the black students at UCT were raised in rural areas of South Africa, and thus, relate to authority, teaching materials, and the university settings in general, very differently from white students. Black professional at the institution would be more sensitive and cognizant of the perceptions of and the contexts in which black

students developed, and thus, could adjust the teaching style and material to better cater for this population of students.

Finally, this research can guide the university to prepare black students for the world of work. The arena of work provides many opportunities for black professionals who have developed knowledge and skills at such institutions. If private and public enterprises are to be run efficiently in South Africa, a competent corps of managerial talent needs to be developed. Given the historical circumstances, and the requirements of South African Labour Legislation, it is essential to focus on the particular needs of black people. The Employment Equity Act of 1998, states that employers with fifty or more employees must ensure plans for affirmative action in their organization. In essence, this plan calls for numerical goals for equitable representation of South Africa's population in terms of race and gender in organizations (Forgey et al. 1999). This means amongst other things, that many prestigious and well-paid jobs are potentially available to the black South African population, provided that they have successfully acquired the necessary skills and knowledge.

1.4 UCT AS THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Since 1993 UCT has undergone many changes in its structures and in its process of governance. In 1996 the new mission statement envisioned UCT as "striving to be a world-class African university" (UCT Strategic Planning Framework, p.3). Whereas in 1984 only 2.7 percent of the students at UCT were black, in 1995 that number increased to 23.6 percent, and in 1998 to forty seven percent of the student body (Student Statistics, 2000). To accommodate these changes UCT, amongst other things, focussed on its institutional culture, and its curriculum development through the Transformation Forum formed in 1994 (The Transformation, 1996). Today these issues are being closely examined by the Center for Higher Education and Development (CHED), which is a non-teaching faculty at UCT. The main aim of CHED is to plan and design strategies to enhance both teaching and learning across all faculties. For students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds CHED has an Academic Development Programme (ADP),

which tries to bridge the educational gap for these students through mediums such as extra tutorials, summer bridging programs, and extended curriculum. Moreover, to bridge the gap of knowledge between students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds and students in the mainstream programs, the ADP in the Commerce faculty encourages study groups, and assists with emerging problems that are identified while monitoring the academic status of students. Each faculty has its own tailored ADP, designed in consultation with CHED.

The normal or mainstream Bachelors of Commerce is a three-year degree. The ADP Bachelor of Commerce degree takes four years to complete because the first year of the normal degree is spread over two years. Thus, after two years of comparatively easy studies, ADP students enter the mainstream of the Bachelor of Commerce degree, where they no longer receive special attention. The sample for this study was chosen from students in their third year of their degree, who had completed the two year ADP in the Commerce faculty and were now part of the mainstream degree.

Apart from academic and financial support, UCT also has in place other structures, such as a Student Development and Services Department, which provides students with support in areas such as health, guidance and counselling, housing and residence life, sports and recreation, and job opportunities, to mention a few. Moreover, UCT has a health center, that pays attention to both physical and psychological challenges of students. Systems of support in the residences have been created to assist students with both academic and personal difficulties, and some other support structures have been put into place to meet the needs of students.

Much time, effort and money has been spent by UCT to cater for the needs of its black students and to assist them to be academically successful at the institution. In actual fact, in its Strategic Planning Framework, UCT states that one of its aims with regards to staffing policy is that of “growing our own timber”, which in essence means that UCT hopes to make use of its graduates as teaching staff. However worthy such an aim may

be, the reality is that many of the black students are struggling academically at this institution and it seems unlikely that many of them will have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to fill potential professional posts at UCT. It is, therefore, very relevant and timely to examine the issues in this arena, and to assess how well UCT's empowering mechanisms are working for its black students. Moreover, although other research has been conducted at UCT with regard to black students and students in general, such research focused on the general needs and challenges of the student population, and not on an assessment of the institution's support systems.

1.5 RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

It is unfortunate that a model of empowerment has not been developed within South Africa to examine and to assess empowering mechanisms for black students in South African tertiary institutions. Such a model would have to take into account the historical context and the subsequent impact and ramifications of apartheid on the present day society, and the specific challenges that are faced by black students today. Past research on UCT has focused on the challenges black students, their perceptions, and their adjustments to the institution (Coleman, 1993; Hall et al., 1995; Honikman, 1982; Kapp, 1998; Leon & Lea, 1988; Sennett, 2000; Taljaard-Plaut & Strauss, 1998). Such data can make a great contribution to empowering students, as the success and efficacy of any intervention depends on how well the institutions are familiar with the needs of their students. The following research has provided much insight on this matter.

Honikman (1982) examined the adjustments that first-year students had to make to university life. Both Honikman (1982) and Sennett (2000) focused particularly on black students. They found that black students had higher levels of alienation than white students at UCT. In 1988 Leon and Lea discovered that black students at UCT were disempowered, as they suffered from the effects of material, social and academic alienation. Subsequently, Coleman (1993) presented ideas regarding the impact that social isolation and personal pressures may have on academic achievement of black students.

In 1995 a pilot research was conducted at UCT, using three different methods: questionnaires, focus discussion groups, and in-depth interviews. Two hundred and sixty six students participated from various faculties. The main aim of the research was to investigate the conditions that enhance student learning, and the degree to which these conditions existed at the institution. The pilot project and its results were documented in a form of a report called "Overcoming Barriers to Learning: A Report on Research Conducted by the Equal Opportunity Research Project into Non-Classroom Related Factors Affecting Academic Performance". The research reported many interesting findings about student academic performance, studying habits, use of resources at the institution, experience with lecturers, class participation, interaction with peers, and feeling valued within the institution. Perhaps the most urgent and critical finding of the study dealt with some of the issues that students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds were facing. It found that "of students who graduated from black government schools, only nine percent average over seventy percent, while sixty percent obtain thirds or below" (Hall et al., 1995. p. 16). Moreover, it found that black male students, in particular felt "high levels of frustration and alienation from the institution" and were doing poorly academically (Hall et al., 1995. p.12). The study suggested that future research should examine this point, specifically looking at the impact that institutional culture and support could have on academic and social empowerment of black male students. In the words of the researchers, "...exploring why, and how to address" this challenge "...may be the most critical area of inquiry for further studies" (Hall et al., 1995. p.12).

Thereafter, Taljaard-Plaut and Strauss (1998) found that black students at UCT were facing many challenges and stresses, which contributed to negative psychological consequences. In addition to the adjustments that many first-year students make, many black students at UCT had to make the adjustment from a rural setting to an urban living; from an African culture, to what was considered a Western, "white" and "English" setting; from living with closely knit family and community to the aloof and distant conditions of the institution; and from being perceived as a high achiever at school, to

being perceived as rather mediocre at the university. Subsequently, Kapp (1998) examined the issues and interrelatedness of language, identity and power for black students at UCT. He argued that the lack of proficiency in the English language could be a barrier to full participation at university. Moreover, he described “circles of privilege” which consisted of students familiar with the English language, and the ramifications this could have on the culture of the institution. Finally, De Villiers (1999) examined the cultural and cognitive differences of black students, and their ramifications for academic success. Issues such as self-competence, motivation, language and learning style of black students were researched.

1.6 EMPOWERMENT: THE FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The concept of empowerment has been used to gain a deeper understanding of the issues that affect black students’ academic achievement. Thus, although the main aim of the study has been to examine the issues relevant to the academic standing of black students at a tertiary institution, the lens used to focus on these issues is the concept of empowerment.

Note must be made, however, that this is a preliminary study, and it does not attempt to examine the issues of empowerment at the individual level. Thus, such concepts as motivation, self-efficacy, and perceived control, which are intrapsychological, are not examined in this study. However, this is due to the limitations of the study, and not to the lack of importance assigned to individual empowerment. It is hoped that in the future a holistic model of empowerment will be developed by researchers for the South African context, the elements of which will be psychological as well as structural and behavioral.

In order to have a clear understanding of the concept as a whole, prior to focusing on one specific area of empowerment, a comprehensive review of empowerment will be presented.

1.7 THE ISSUE OF PERCEPTIONS

This study attempts to examine the degree to which UCT has been able to empower its black students to do well academically. The responses were obtained from students at the institution, and therefore, it must be noted that the data presented in this study are the perceptions of the participants, and not necessarily the objective reality. Individual perceptions are the lenses through which people understand, interpret, and make sense of their world. Perceptions are the product of several components: people's physical and social environments; their psychological structures; their values, needs, and goals; and their past experiences (Krech, Crutchfield & Ballachey, 1962). Therefore, what may be reality to one person, may not be the reality to another. Thus, reality is subjective and is built on people's perceptions. As Burns points out, "perception is other than what is physically out there. Yet what is perceived is reality for the perceiver, the only reality by which he can guide his behavior" (1979, p.32).

Perceptions have great significance in the South African context, especially when considering the history of this country. The inequalities perpetuated under the system of apartheid have officially and legally been discontinued, but the psychological perceptions which were created under such a system may indeed be present today. It must be understood that in essence many of the black students at UCT have perceptions that are embedded in experiences which emerged under the context of apartheid. Thus, the way they may relate to the concept of authority, of personal responsibility, of the university setting and its students and staff is potentially determined by their past experiences.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 EMPOWERMENT: AN HISTORICAL REVIEW

There are many definitions of empowerment, which have developed over the years. In essence empowerment means helping people to help themselves. The concept of empowerment emerged in the 1960's, and was rooted in the "social action" ideology (Kieffer, 1984). During the 1960's the concept was used in specific arenas, such as America's War on Poverty (Swift and Levin, 1987). During that time the understanding of this concept was still in its primitive stages, and the "maximum feasible participation" provision was made for the poor, whose problems were ultimately represented by professional bureaucrats (Swift & Levin, 1987). Other Community Action Programs tried to address various issues using this concept, and thus, a deeper understanding of the concept emerged through the years. In the 1970's the concept of empowerment took the shape of self- help groups and books (Kieffer, 1984). It was during this time that the understanding of the concept became more crystallized, and it was realized that if empowerment was to take place, the self had to play a central role with regard to motivation and direction in this process. The popularity of the concept was beginning to grow. As Zimmerman (1995) points out, from 1974 to 1986 there were ninety six articles in the psychological literature that had the root word "empower" in their title or abstract. But from 1987 to 1993 the number exploded to six hundred and eighty six journal articles and two hundred and eighty three book chapters on the concept of empowerment. The concept is widely used in academic circles, political spheres, community development, public health arenas, and organizational management, just to mention a few (Zimmerman, 1995). As Swift and Levin (1987) point out, the concept is being applied more and more often to any initiative that tries to do some good in the world, and thus, the concept is being over used and even misused. It is therefore, imperative to examine the many facets of empowerment and to try to find a common understanding or definition that can be applied to the study.

2.2 EMPOWERMENT AND ITS ELEMENTS

It is interesting to note that the word empowerment encapsulates the word “power” in it. There are many types of power: social, economic, physical or mental, just to name a few. Empowerment refers to two types of specific power: psychological and structural.

Psychological power, according to Swift & Levin (1987) refers to a “phenomenological development of a certain state of mind” or a psychological sense of personal control (p. 73). Psychological power manifests itself in degrees. It is not an absolute phenomenon. The process by which this state of mind is reached is empowerment. This type of empowerment is closely linked to a person’s sense of self-efficacy, motivation to exert control, and an internal or external locus of control. Psychological empowerment refers to what goes on in people’s minds, which, in turn, is grounded in their perceptions of how the world works and how and where they fit in. Marc Zimmerman is the father of psychological empowerment, and the development of this construct and its relationship with other psychological phenomena will be examined later in detail. The other type of power, as mentioned previously is structural power, which refers to the objective reality as opposed to the subjective experience of the person (Swift & Levin 1987). As with psychological power, structural power also has various degrees.

Structural power is concerned with the actual degree of power that people or groups have, such as social influence, political power, and legal rights (Swift & Levin 1987). It is important to note that it is the “degree” of power that is mentioned, and not its absolute quantity. It is the relative distribution of power that is critical. The process by which structural power is reached or maintained is called structural empowerment.

Unfortunately in many Western societies the perception is that of the “scarcity paradigm”, which translates power into scarce resources, such as money, political votes or material resources. From this perspective the consequence of empowerment would be to increase one person or one group’s power while at the same time decreasing another’s (Swift & Levin, 1987). There is, however an alternative view to the situation that is from

the synergistic paradigm. Katz (1984, as cited in Swift & Levin, 1987) argues that in the field of human development the “scarcity paradigm” no longer has meaning. In fact it is the reverse: people can become empowered without diminishing the power of others. The more people have control over the important aspects of their lives, the less dependent they will be on others. Thus, power becomes a renewable resource, which does not require competition for its possession. Swift and Levin (1987) give the example of parents empowering their children from infancy to adulthood, during which time skills and knowledge are passed on to the children in order that they may be successful adults. Erikson (1950, as cited in Swift & Levin, 1987) uses the example of a mentor, who would use his or her wisdom and knowledge to guide those in need. In the given examples, neither the parents nor the mentor have lost any degree of power.

Examples of structural empowerment are varied. They could range from material assistance, to individual or group participation in a certain project, to the learning and development of certain needed skills, to being able to be part of a consultative process on important issues that affect one’s life. Structural empowerment will also be examined in detail at a later stage. Having reviewed the basic elements of empowerment, it is timely to examine some of its definitions.

Maton and Salem (1995) define empowerment as “the active participatory process of gaining resources or competencies needed to increase control over one’s life and accomplish important life goals” (p. 632). Mechanic (1991, as cited in Maton & Salem, 1995, p. 632) defines empowerment as “a process in which people develop a closer correspondence between their goals, efforts, and life outcomes”. Perkins and Zimmerman (1995) point out that empowerment is more than a traditional psychological construct, and that it highlights the positive possibilities rather than the negative in people’s lives. Various dictionaries define empowerment in two ways: either to give, invest or grant power and authority to others; or to enable others, or give others the ability to obtain power by their own efforts (Swift & Levin, 1987). Whatever definition is used, it must be noted that empowerment is not something that is “done” to another party. People and groups empower themselves: “It’s more a question of allowing people to reach their

potential by removing the obstacles that lie in their path” (Swift & Levin 1987. p. 73). Thus, empowerment is self-motivated, and is a process of self-transformation.

The exact nature of empowerment is also defined by the nature of the problem it tries to address. In essence, how the problem is defined will have a great bearing on what the solution is. As Swift & Levin (1987) point out, there are various typologies of worldviews, which try to explain the reason for social problems in the world. One view revolves around the degree of responsibility for the ills of the world. At one end of the continuum the individual is held responsible; and at the other end of the continuum it is the social system. One view holds that we all have free will, and thus are accountable and responsible for where we find ourselves in life. Thus, an empowering intervention from this point of view would focus on empowering the individual, using such methods as psychotherapy, job training or spiritual counselling (Swift & Levin, 1987). On the other hand, if the problem is perceived as structural, then the intervention would try to remove the obstacles that hamper empowerment. Such interventions could include legal or political action, or community control of institutions (Swift & Levin 1987). In most instances the responsibility lies with both the individual and the system. Thus, many interventions have components of psychological as well as structural empowerment.

The definition of empowerment used for this study is “the active participatory process of gaining resources or competencies needed to increase control over one’s life and accomplish important life goals” (Maton and Salem, 1995, p.632). This definition takes cognizance of the following elements: that empowerment is a process, and is measured in degrees, and is not viewed as an absolute entity. Moreover, active participation is required to learn the necessary skills or to obtain needed resources. In other words, empowerment does not give “hand downs” to victimized individuals, rather, it recognizes the inherent capacity of people to help themselves. Finally, this definition takes into account that different individuals have different life goals, and thus, empowering mechanisms for each life goal are unique to that goal.

2.3 EMPOWERMENT AND ITS DYNAMICS

2.3.1 THE PERSON-ENVIRONMENT FIT

Over the years, research in the field of empowerment has shown that it is not enough to address issues only from either a psychological or structural perspective: the responsibility of a grim situation does not only lie with individuals and their psychological make-up; nor does it solely lie with structural or environmental matters. It is the “interaction” between the environment and people’s psychological perspectives that determines how empowered or disempowered individuals may be. As Zimmerman (1990) points out, the concept is about a “person-environment fit”; and he warns researchers “not to ignore one level of analysis in the interest of another but to struggle with efforts to integrate levels of analysis for understanding the construct in its entirety” (p.174). Vincent and Trickett (1983) called this view the “principle of interdependence”, explaining that people needed to be understood in the context of their environment (as cited in Swift & Levin, 1987). Altman and Rogoff (in press) reiterate this point by arguing that in the transactional model of world view incidents are “understood in the context of a particular set of circumstances with attention to the patterns of relationships and events that emerge as persons and environments reciprocally influence and shape each other” (as cited in Swift & Levin, 1987. p.80). It can thus be concluded that any comprehensive study of empowerment must give attention to both the individual and the environmental aspects of the situation being examined.

2.3.2 EMPOWERMENT AND CONTEXT SPECIFICITY

On a day to day basis individuals function in various contexts: they could be at home with other family members, or at work with colleagues, or enjoying time with friends at a party, or taking part in religious service, just to mention a few. Each of these contexts is

different, and the power relations in them are varied. Thus, empowerment takes on different meanings for each context. What may be empowering to an individual in a family setting may not be empowering to the same individual at work. Also, an individual may feel empowered and in control in a certain context, for example at work, but may not feel empowered in a different context, such as at home. The degree of empowerment that is experienced by that individual will greatly depend on the dynamics and the power play in those situations. As Perkins and Zimmerman (1995) point out, empowerment is a concept that is context-specific. Foster-Fishman, Salem, Chibnall, Legler, and Yapchai (1998) take this concept one step further, and suggest that “any one setting may consist of multiple subcultures or environments”, especially in settings such as organizational systems. A worker in an organization may be part of a different sub culture when working with colleagues than when working with superiors. Students at a university have their own sub cultures in their residences, in their lecture theaters, in their cafeterias, and in the library, just to mention a few. Thus, when examining a certain context for its degree of empowerment, attention must be paid to each sub culture in that particular context, and it must be understood how each sub culture influences the experience of people with regard to empowerment (Foster-Fishman et al., 1998).

2.3.3 EMPOWERMENT AND PEOPLE SPECIFICITY

Just as empowerment is a context specific concept, it is also people specific. Collins (1986, as cited in Foster-Fisherman et al., 1998, p.509) notes that because individuals come from different backgrounds, and have had varied interactions with society and social opportunities, it then should be expected that “individuals with different racial, gender, class, and social backgrounds to desire different forms of empowerment”. For example, black African women in townships would most probably have different issues that need to be addressed with regard to empowerment than white women living in the city’s suburbs. At the same time it must be said that both groups most probably share some common challenges, as both groups consist of women. Thus, there is no universal set of rules to empowerment that can be applied to all people; each group of people require a different approach and intervention with regard to empowerment.

It is interesting to note that individuals from the same kind of social background will respond differently to empowerment and will give it different meanings depending on previous experience they may have had with regard to empowerment. For example, it was found that people who had had no previous experience in a participatory decision-making process found a prescriptive leader empowering, whereas those people who already had some experience with the empowerment process needed to be involved in the actual decision making process to feel empowered (Bartunek, Foster-Fishman & Keys, 1996; Bartunek, Lacey & Wood, 1992, as cited in Foster-Fishman, 1998). Thus, to be able to understand the dynamics of empowerment in relation to a certain group of people, it is imperative to know as much as possible about their backgrounds and experiences.

2.3.4 EMPOWERMENT AND TIME SPECIFICITY

Another dynamic of empowerment is that it is time specific. Contexts are continually changing over time, and thus, the way they affect people also changes (Gergen, 1985; Martin, 1992, as cited in Foster-Fishman et al., 1998). Empowering interventions that may work for a certain group of people today, may not work for that same group of people in the distant future. For example, people in rural areas who have never had access to telephone facilities may benefit from training on how to use the telephone, once the facility has been installed in their area. This new skill would empower them to make use of this new facility. Over time, however, as telephones become more readily accessible in rural areas, it is unlikely that such an intervention would result in empowerment, as most of the residents would probably have some idea of how to use the facility.

Changes in contexts do not necessarily come about over long periods of time. Sometimes the change can be daily or even hourly. For example, a dentist may feel in control of his practice and his work at a certain time on a given day, but may have a drastic change in attitude, and feel quite disempowered after treating a difficult child. It can be argued though that in such cases a psychological choice exists for people who deal with the challenges of every day life: either to choose an appropriate response to the situation and

feel in control and empowered; or to react to the situation and feel out of control and disempowered. Whether the changes and fluctuations in the context are short term or long term, it must be noted that any empowering interventions deal with the present, and are not effective for situations in the distant future.

2.3.5 EMPOWERMENT PROCESS AND OUTCOME

It is important to distinguish between empowerment process and empowerment outcomes. The process refers to how people or communities or organizations become empowered. The outcome is the end result- the consequence of the process (Zimmerman, 1995). An empowering process is defined as “ a series of experiences in which individuals learn to see a closer correspondence between their goals and a sense of how to achieve them, gain greater access to and control over resources, and where people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives” (Zimmerman, 1990a , as cited in Zimmerman, 1995, p.583). Several criteria exist for empowering processes. Over the years various researchers have given them various names and have refined the concept. Kelly (1971, as cited in Zimmerman, 1995) suggested that empowering processes where professionals were involved required four elements: firstly, to involve the community or people in the design, implementation and evaluation of any empowering interventions. Secondly, for the professionals to become, in a sense, members of the community, so that they would not be regarded as outsiders. Closely related to this, is the third point, which emphasizes the fact that professionals must become co-equals with community members. And lastly, to help community members learn skills in order that they would be able to function independently of the professional assistance. Later, Kelly (1988, as cited in Zimmerman, 1995) added to this concept by pointing out that it would be important for community members to also participate in defining the problem to begin with. He called this process a “participative ownership process”.

In later years the name Participatory Action Research (PAR) was used more widely (Brown, 1993, Chesler, 1991, Elden & Chisolm, 1993, Hall1992, Rappaport, 1990,

Whyte, 1991, Yeich & Levin, 1992, as cited in Zimmerman, 1995). PAR incorporated all the other previously mentioned criteria in its concept, with the addition of some new dimensions. It emphasized the need for community members to develop the knowledge and the skills needed to have a basic understanding of the sociopolitical system it wanted to affect. It further encouraged community members to work together towards a common goal and to create a mutual support system for each other (Zimmerman, 1995). It is noteworthy to mention that empowering processes can occur at any level of analysis: the individual, the community, and the organization. Further, that sometimes the process may result in both an empowering process and an empowering outcome. For example, it was discovered that an empowering intervention that was designed to assist Mexican homosexual men to develop, implement and evaluate an AIDS prevention programme, also resulted in safer sexual practices amongst the participants of the program (Zimmerman, Ramirez, Suarez, de la Rosa, and Castro, 1994; as cited in Zimmerman, 1995).

The measurement of an empowered outcome will depend on the situation and the challenge being addressed. Thus, each case merits its own definition of an empowered outcome. However, Zimmerman (1995) has found that across levels of analysis some themes were central. They were: mastery and control over important arenas in one's life; participation in community activities or groups to work towards a desired outcome; knowledge of the sociopolitical context, which refers to knowing how systems operate in a given context; and resource mobilization, which refers to being able to use various resources, such as skills and knowledge in different contexts. Empowering outcomes will be examined in more detail at a later stage, to see what shape it takes at each level of analysis: namely, the individual, the community, and the organization. For now it should be noted that empowerment outcomes are not absolute, but relative. Thus, empowerment is a concept that is measured in degrees.

2.3.6 THE THREE LEVELS OF EMPOWERMENT

There are three levels of empowerment: the individual, the community, and the organization. The individual level of empowerment has been a point of much research, and, as Zimmerman (1990) argues, it is the individual, after all, who is the common denominator of all other levels of empowerment. A word of caution is given, not to confuse individual empowerment with other closely related themes, such as locus of control, self-efficacy, and motivation to exert control (Zimmerman, 1990). Whereas these constructs are independent of context, time and culture, individual empowerment is deeply rooted in context: it is a person-environment fit. Zimmerman (1990) calls this Psychological Empowerment (PE). The name, Psychological Empowerment can be deceiving, as it suggests that it is only about psychological issues, or what goes on in a person's mind. However, this is not the case. PE is about the interaction between a person's psychological make-up and the environment resulting in a certain outcome.

The other two levels of empowerment, namely community and organizational, are not simply "a collection of empowered individuals" (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995, p.571). Community and organizational empowerment are better understood as structural constructs in helping people to help themselves. They incorporate elements of giving members a voice and encouraging participatory decision-making; being flexible and open to change; sharing resources equally between members; and removing any institutional practices that result in dysfunctional outcomes (Swift & Levin, 1987). Thus, empowerment at the structural level refers to policies and culture within an institution. Each of these levels of analysis will now be examined in more detail.

As previously mentioned, although the concept used for this study is structural empowerment, it is important to have a clear understanding of the concept of empowerment in its totality, which includes empowerment at the individual level of analysis.

2.4 EMPOWERMENT AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Empowerment at the individual level of analysis has been spearheaded by Marc Zimmerman, who calls the concept Psychological Empowerment (PE). PE has three various components: intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioural (Zimmerman, 1992). PE is an open-ended construct, which means that it is context, people, and time specific. The three components of PE are abstract concepts, but they are also observable phenomena, which interact with each other to produce a certain result (Zimmerman, 1995). This network of interaction is called a nomological network, and it can be empirically tested as it has concrete operational definitions.

2.4.1 THE INTRAPERSONAL COMPONENT

This component is purely intrapsychic. It refers to peoples' own perceptions of their abilities and power to influence certain outcomes that are important to them (Zimmerman, 1992). The elements of this component are: domain specific perceived control (Paulhus, 1983), domain specific self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), motivation to exert control, and perceived competence (Zimmerman, 1992).

Domain specific perceived control refers to the concept of locus of control (Paulhus, 1983). Levenson (1973, as cited in Paulhus, 1983) points out that people assign control to three things: chance, others, and the self. If people believe that various events are dependent on their own behaviour or personal characteristics, then they have internal locus of control. On the other hand, if they assign events or outcomes to forces in the environment not within their control, then they have an external locus of control (Rotter, 1966). Paulhus explains that people have three spheres of personal efficacy: the self, the interpersonal sphere, and the sociopolitical sphere (1983). The sphere of the self refers to having "personal efficacy" in a nonsocial environment, which in essence is of personal achievement, such as solving a puzzle. The "interpersonal control" refers to people interacting with others in various situations. Control in this sphere could mean developing good relationships or having harmony in one's family life (Paulhus, 1983). The "sociopolitical control" refers to people feeling in control with relation to social and political systems, and using such methods as boycotts or demonstrations to achieve a

desired outcome. People could well feel different levels of control in each sphere, but ultimately the three spheres of control correlate moderately with each other, and it is the combined overall score of the three spheres that determines the level of external or internal locus of control in people (Paulhus, 1983). White (1959) and DeCharms (as cited in Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988) thought that people inherently have a desire to control their environment, and saw this as a motivational component of perceived control. Rotter (1966, as cited in Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988) operationalized locus of control as a personality aspect, whereas Bandura (1977) perceived it as a cognitive construct, as reflected in his work in self-efficacy theory.

Domain-specific self-efficacy refers to how people perceive their ability and effectiveness to influence a desired outcome in a specific situation (Bandura, 1977). As Bandura points out, “expectations of personal mastery affect both initiation and persistence of coping behavior” (1977, p. 193). If people feel that they do not have the capability to deal successfully with a certain situation, it is very likely that they will avoid that setting altogether, or will not exert effort to bring about the desired effect. Thus, people’s own perceptions of their capability has a strong influence on motivation to exert control. Moreover, people’s expectations of success largely determines the length of time they would persevere in the face of challenging situations (Bandura, 1977). This concept has great ramifications for the South African context: if the system of apartheid was able to influence black people to doubt their capabilities, and this attitude was passed on to the new generation, it is likely, even in the face of numerous opportunities, that the motivation to exert control for a desired outcome will not be present from this population group, especially in the face of challenging circumstances. It would be important to understand the implications as it relates to black students in tertiary educational institutions.

2.4.2 THE INTERACTIONAL COMPONENT

The interactional component of PE refers to the interaction people have with other people and their environment. It requires that people have a good understanding of various

contexts in their community, especially with regard to sociopolitical issues (Zimmerman, 1995). Once individuals learn about the values and norms in specific given contexts, then they will be able to see clear choices before them, and thus, make informed decisions to affect a desired outcome (Zimmerman, 1995). The elements of the interactional component are: having a critical awareness of one's environment, which refers to knowing which resources are needed to achieve a certain goal, and how to acquire and manage those resources (Zimmerman, 1995). Another element is having an understanding of causal agents, which refers to knowing which people, objects, or events have a bearing on one's own influence to have control in sociopolitical spheres (Sue and Zane, 1980, as cited in Zimmerman, 1995). The interactional component of PE also consists of skill development, and being able to transfer those skills across life domains. Specifically, the skills of leadership and decision-making are critical for a positive outcome, as they will ultimately assist people to become independent and to be in control of their own lives (Zimmerman, 1995).

These skills can be learned in various settings that are open to change and participatory decision-making. They can be learnt through direct experience, or observation, or modelling behaviour (Bandura, 1982, as cited in Zimmerman, 1990 b). Skills can be learnt from professional therapists (Zimmerman, 1990 b) or alternatively from settings such as mutual help groups (Rappaport, 1987, as cited in Zimmerman, 1990 b). There has been some research regarding skill building and coping behavior, which has shown that it is more likely that people with such skills would participate in community organizations and activities, than people without such skills (Rappaport, 1981; 1985, as cited in Zimmerman, 1990 b). Moreover, research on individual effects of participation and involvement in community organizations has suggested that such participation enhances individuals' perceived control and reduces the feeling of alienation (Levens, 1968; Zurcher, 1970; Langer & Rodin, 1976; Rosi, 1982; Kieffer, 1984, as cited in Zimmerman, 1990 b). As Zimmerman (1992) suggests, more research must be done on the interactional component of PE, because it may be the link that bridges the gap between the intrapersonal component and the behavioral component. In other words, skill

development and understanding one's context may be the bridge between the cognitive or what goes on in peoples' heads, and initiating constructive behaviour.

2.4.3 THE BEHAVIOURAL COMPONENT

The behavioural component of PE refers to actual actions that people take to ensure a certain outcome (Zimmerman, 1992). Obviously, the behaviour will be different for each context and desired goal. For adolescents it could be joining a sport team in their school; for patients released from a psychiatric institution, it could be following up with mutual help groups or securing employment (Zimmerman, 1995). The elements of the behavioral component are: community involvement, organizational participation, and coping behaviours (Zimmerman, 1995). As noted previously, empowerment is not only an outcome, but also a process. Thus, involvement in community activities that are participatory are part of the empowering process. Unfortunately, the situation is not always so simple: people with skills and knowledge do not always get matched to work in empowering institutions. In fact, it would be likely that individuals who were empowered at the intrapersonal and interactional levels, and who worked in hierarchical organizations, where little room existed for participatory decision-making, would feel high levels of frustration. Thus, when professionals want to assist a certain person or group to become empowered through an intervention, they must first ask themselves if empowered individuals will be happy to function in the given settings.

One other aspect of behavioural empowerment is that participation in community activities can give people a sense of belonging or a sense of community. Maton and Rappaport have found that having a sense of community is associated with individual empowerment (1984, as cited in Zimmerman, 1990 a).

2.4.4 PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AND RELATED CONCEPTS

Other concepts that are closely related to PE are self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), self-esteem, competence, mental health, power (Zimmerman, 1995), and learned helpfulness

(Zimmerman, 1990 b). Learned helplessness is the reciprocal construct of PE (Campbell and Martinko, 1998). Zimmerman cautions that although these constructs at times seem very similar to PE, they should not be confused with PE (Zimmerman, 1995).

Self-efficacy is only one part of the intrapersonal component of PE. Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988) found that the combined variance of eleven different measures of perceived control formed a single dimension that distinguished people with different levels of involvement in community activities. The eleven measures included general self-efficacy, political efficacy, locus of control, and motivation to control. Thus, the study concluded that self-efficacy was only one of the elements of the intrapersonal component of PE.

Coopersmith refers to self-esteem as people's "personal judgment of their own worth (1967, as cited in Zimmerman, 1995, p.591). Self-esteem is generally thought of as a personality trait, although some researchers have suggested it to be a domain-specific trait (Harter, 1990, as cited in Zimmerman, 1995). Zimmerman points out that it is possible for people with low self-esteem to be involved in community organizations and activities, because they may have an illusion of incompetence, whereas in reality they may be quite capable (1995). Whatever are the dynamics of self-esteem, Zimmerman argues that unlike PE, this concept does not "include perceptions about one's perceived control, participatory behavior, critical awareness, or specific skills necessary to exert control in a particular setting (1995, p. 591). Thus, self-esteem is not synonymous with PE.

The construct of competence is another concept that must be distinguished from PE. Zimmerman points out that although perceived competence is an element of the intrapersonal component of PE, it does not usually address sociopolitical factors, such as political awareness, causal agents or social change. Nor does it include organized action to strive with others towards a desired goal (1995). Whereas in most cases competence is associated with coping with environmental events, PE is connected to more proactive behavior (Zimmerman, 1995).

Mental health is defined either as “the absence of mental illness” or “the presence of healthy behavior and cognition” (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 591). PE is associated with the latter definition. Most people would probably think that PE is interchangeable with the concept of mental health. But in reality, it is possible to have individuals with mental illness striving for PE. They may do this by trying to gain a deeper understanding of their illness, developing coping skills, understanding how the medical system operates to their best advantage, and thus, gaining some degree of control over their lives (Zimmerman, 1995). Several studies have supported the fact that psychiatric patients feel an increased level of empowerment by helping other patients (Rappaport, Reischl and Zimmerman, 1991, as cited in Zimmerman, 1995). Thus, PE is not, and cannot be defined as “mental health”.

The relationship between power and empowerment is an interesting one. Zimmerman (1995) suggests that individuals do not necessarily need to have power or authority to be able to realize their objectives, and thus, feel psychologically empowered. He further argues that power is suggestive of authority, whereas PE is associated with feelings of control, having a critical awareness of one’s environment and being actively involved in it. He further argues that real power or control may not be the desired goal for some populations, rather, that they would benefit more from learning various skills or gaining knowledge or taking part in decision making. Zimmerman (1995) cites several examples of people with low social status affecting social policy, and thus, feeling empowered (Checkoway & Doyle, 1980; Fish, 1973; O’Sullivan, Waugh, & Espeland, 1984; Piven & Cloward, 1977). But in most of these cases, even though people did not ascend the social or political ladder to make a contribution, the institutions that they approached were open to change. In essence, the institutions were willing to “share” power by inviting comments from the public, or including others in the decision making process. Thus, it is not accurate to say that empowerment does not necessarily need the sharing of power. There is no doubt that those same individuals would have felt very frustrated had their ideas or comments not been noted.

One other concept that is closely linked to PE is the concept of “Learned Hopefulness” (Zimmerman, 1990 b). Learned Hopefulness is defined as “the process of learning and utilizing problem-solving skills and the achievement of perceived or actual control” (p. 72). It is suggested that learned hopefulness is a process whereby people learn skills and coping mechanisms, which in turn would develop a sense of PE. Perceived control is the main variable associated with this theory (Zimmerman, 1990 b). When people can expect meaningful future events to be controllable, characteristics of learned hopefulness appear. These include an increased sense of PE, proactive behavior, and reduced alienation (Zimmerman, 1990 b). On the other hand, if individuals feel that they are unable to control meaningful future events, characteristics of learned helplessness become evident. They are withdrawal, alienation, and depression (Zimmerman, 1990 b).

It has been suggested by Campbell and Martinko (1998) that learned helplessness is a reciprocal construct of PE. Thus they exist on different ends of the same continuum. Learned helplessness is defined as “ a debilitating cognitive state in which individuals often possess the requisite skills and abilities to perform their jobs, but exhibit sub optimal performance because they attribute prior failures to causes which they cannot change, even though success is possible in the current environment (Martinko and Gardner, 1982, as cited in Campbell and Martinko, 1988). However, not all people respond to uncontrollable events the same way. It was found that individuals’ cognitive styles were the main factor in determining how people interpreted events. In the face of uncontrollable events, action-oriented individuals increased their efforts to control, while more dependent individuals decreased their efforts (Brunstein and Olbrich, 1985, as cited in Zimmerman, 1990 b). Again, learned helplessness is a concept that is closely associated with perceived control. It is interesting to note that Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988) found that different types of perceived control existed in citizens who were actively involved in voluntary organizations and community activities. However, all the measures pointed to one characteristic of perceived control, which was effective leadership. They also found that it correlated negatively with the concept of alienation.

There is no doubt that all the above mentioned concepts are closely related to PE, but exactly how they coexist with each other, and what effects they have will become more apparent as research in the arena of PE becomes more advanced.

2.5 EMPOWERMENT AT THE COMMUNITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEVELS

Over the years research in the social sciences has increased its focus on how people come together to address common issues of concern and to improve the quality of life in the community. A community can take many shapes: it can be represented as a physical place, as relationships between people, or as collective political power (Gusfield, 1975; Heller, 1989; Suttles, 1972, as cited in Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). The process by which communities make changes in their environments also takes on various forms: community development, or community building, or community organization (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). There are a variety of issues from all spectrums of life that are addressed through community organizations. For example, they are addressed in churches, self-help groups, neighbourhood organizations, unions, professional associations, and political parties, just to mention a few. Each group, of course has its own mission and goals, but many of them operate in similar ways or face similar challenges.

It is important to note that communities or groups or organizations are made up of people and relationships, and do not function in a vacuum. Therefore, empowerment at the community or organizational levels depends greatly on whether individual members are empowered or not. It was found that a strong link exists between individual empowerment and empowerment at the collective level, such as an organization or a community or a group (McMillan, Florin, Stevenson, Kerman & Mitchell, 1995). On the one hand, when examining the dynamics of community and organizational empowerment, the "individual's" interaction with the environment should never be minimized; and on the other hand, it should be remembered that organizational and community empowerment "are not simply a collection of empowered individuals"

(Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995, p.571). It is the “interaction” between the individual and the system that leads to empowerment or lack of it.

Community empowerment is defined broadly as “the process of gaining influence over conditions that matter to people who share neighbourhoods, workplaces, experiences, or concerns” (Fawcett, Paine-Andrews, Francisco, Schultz, Richter, Lewis, Williams, Harris, Berkley, Fisher & Lopez, 1995, p.679). It is important to note here that people may come together to address certain concerns, but that does not necessarily lead to the formation of an organization. An organization is formed if the community or group ensure that the cause lives on, that it gains momentum and becomes more powerful over time, that others join in and funding becomes available, and that initiative is taken, usually by leaders, to set up a system to manage the affairs of the cause (Gutierrez & Linnea, 1995). Speer and Hughey (1995) have a different opinion about community empowerment. They argue that social empowerment can only be achieved through organizations, which in turn, are built upon the strength of the relationships between its members. Relationships develop as individuals interact with each other in a “cycle” of assessment, research, action, and reflection.

In whatever way organizations are created it is possible to distinguish between “empowering” and “empowered” organizations (McMillan et al., 1995). Empowering organizations have certain characteristics or elements in the way they operate that they manage to empower their members. These characteristics will shortly be examined in depth, but consist of such things as coalition climate, decision-making processes, and communication patterns (McMillan et al., 1995). Empowered organizations, on the other hand, refer to organizations that are viable, that manage to influence and make changes in areas of concern, and that are able to mobilize and access resources for such purposes (McMillan et al., 1995). Some researchers have argued that it is possible to have empowered organizations without them necessarily being empowering to their members (Zimmerman, 1995, as cited in McMillan et al., 1995), but McMillan and his colleagues found empirical support for the contrary. They found that “the extent to which a task force was empowering of its members was related to the task force later being

organizationally empowered” , specifically if the “organizational climate was more focused, inclusive, and satisfactory” (p. 720). In essence, by nurturing members, those same members created organizational capacity. Along the same line, several other studies have found that participatory decision-making and task focus were elements that promoted involvement and time and service given to voluntary organizations (Milburn & Barbarin, 1987; Prestby & Wandersman, 1985, as cited in McMillan et al., 1995).

The fundamental question is to distinguish between an organization that in objective reality practices principles of empowerment, and the “perceptions” that members have of the organization, which will be based upon their own “subjective” interpretation of the organization (Spreitzer, 1995). Bandura suggests that people are affected by their own perceptions of an environment (1989); and Thomas and Velthouse (1990) reiterate this point by arguing that individuals make interpretations of observable organizational conditions, which may not be in accordance with objective reality (as cited in Spreitzer, 1995). For example, Lawrence and Lorsch found that individuals within the same environment viewed their work environment differently (1967, as cited in Spreitzer, 1995). Thus, it becomes imperative to try to gain an understanding of how individuals within a community or organizational setting perceive, interpret, and internalize their objective reality.

2.5.1 COMPONENTS OF COMMUNITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL EMPOWERMENT

Probably the major component of organizational and community empowerment is that of participation. This component has been the focus of much research over the past decade (Prestby, Wandersman, Florin, Rich, Chavis, 1990; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; McMillan et al., 1995). The general finding is that individuals who participate in community or organizational activities, have a higher level of empowerment. Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988) discovered that across a variety of organizations, members with a greater degree of participation had higher scores of personal and political efficacy. It must be noted that the findings have all been correlational in nature and not

causal. Maton and Salem (1995) found that in all of the three empowering organizations being examined, members achieved their personal goals in the context of interactions with others, of active participation in the organization, and consequently, of gaining a sense of control over their lives. In essence, participatory behavior was the very axis of the framework developed. McMillan et al. (1995) define organizational participation as “the amount of time an individual devotes to the organization, the different roles that an individual plays for the organization, and the proximate benefits and costs expected” (p. 705). In a study McMillan and his colleagues examined several variables important for Psychological Empowerment. They found that above and beyond any of the variables, the strongest relationship to Psychological Empowerment was that of participation (1995). They mention that “achieving “ and “doing” are the important elements, and that it is unlikely that members feel empowered by being a “bystander”.

Prestby et al. (1990) expanded on the concept of participation, and tried to find out what made people participate in community organizations, and what made them avoid it. Using social exchange and political economy theory as guiding principles, Prestby et al. argued that individuals will participate if the benefits are greater than the costs of participation; and if the benefits are varied, and thus, more valuable (1990). Examples of participation costs could be people’s time, money, effort, absence from family members, interpersonal conflict, lack of social support, lack of organizational progress, and disagreement with organizational goals or activities, to mention a few. Benefits range from satisfactory relationships to skill development, ego gratification and enjoyment of leadership. Varied benefits refers to “selective” or “private” rewards, which benefit only those who have participated, as opposed to a blanket approach, in which everyone receives the same benefits or recognition regardless of the level of participation. For this study, three types of benefits were examined: material benefits, which refers to tangible rewards; solitary benefits, which refers to social interactions, group identification, and recognition; and purposive benefits, which were derived from doing one’s sense of duty, bettering the community, and fulfilling a sense of responsibility (Prestby et al., 1990). Research suggests that most active participants in voluntary organizations are motivated by purposive benefits, and to a lesser extent, by solitary benefits (Rich, 1980; Silloway &

McPherson, 1986; Yates, 1973, as cited in Prestby et al., 1990). The study showed that “higher levels of participation in block associations were significantly related to higher benefits and lower costs.

Effective leadership played an important role in encouraging members to become active participants in these voluntary community organizations. If the leaders had an “incentive and cost management” approach, it was likely that they could promote participatory behavior from members, which ultimately promoted individual empowerment (Prestby et al., 1990). This type of leadership required an assessment of the needs of the members in the organization, and subsequently, a tailored approach to the needs of each member. For example, if it was found that lack of childcare facilities was a major cost to mothers in the organization, then organizational leaders would try to address that particular need. It was also found that leaders could, through incentive and cost management efforts promote organizational viability, whereby members’ commitment and satisfaction, and organizational productivity and cohesiveness were influenced (Prestby et al., 1990).

Leadership is another important component of organizational and community empowerment. Not only are leaders usually responsible for programme development and administrative support in organizations, they are, most importantly, responsible for initiating vision, and keeping that vision ever fresh in members’ minds (Gutierrez & GlenMay, 1995). One of the characteristics that Maton and Salem (1995) found to be empowering to three diverse settings was leadership that was inspirational. By this is meant that leaders conveyed a clear vision to, and set an example for organizational members. Moreover, effective leaders had to be organizationally and interpersonally talented, which in essence meant that they could easily engage with diverse people and had the knowledge and wisdom of facilitating change in the organization. Maton and Salem (1995) also found that leadership that was shared and committed to the institution and the setting, was also effective. Thus, responsibility for leadership was not resting solely with one person, but was open to expansion. Committed leaders encouraged organizational members’ participation and welcomed their ideas in the decision making process.

Related to its leadership is culture within an organization. Culture is defined as “the values and beliefs that produce cognitions and norms of behavior in organizations” (Smircich, 1983, as cited in Spreitzer, 1995, p. 609). In essence, the culture of the organization defines what is important and what should be given attention or cared about (Spreitzer, 1995). Evered and Selman (1989, as cited in Spreitzer, 1995, p.609) define empowering cultures to “value the acknowledgment, creation, and liberation of employees” whereas disempowering cultures “value control, order, and predictability”. An empowering organizational culture views organizational members as assets of creativity, and as key to organizational success. Spreitzer (1995) found that in the work environment employees were more empowered if they felt knowledgeable about the organization and its environment, which created a sense of ownership. Moreover, a participative culture helped employees to feel that they were important assets to the organization, and that they truly made a difference. Other researchers have found similar findings.

Maton and Salem (1995) discovered that one of the empowering characteristics in their study, which was present in different empowering contexts, was the culture or value of the organization. The organizations were empowering if they inspired growth by indicating salient goals and ensuring the presence of clear means to achieve those goals. Moreover, members were not only viewed as having the capability to achieve the organization’s goals, but to be valuable resources to the organization. Lastly, the empowering culture of the organizations encouraged members to look beyond themselves, and to feel loyalty to a wider group, outside the organization. Gutierrez and GlenMay (1995) argue that “in an empowerment -based approach, awareness of the power imbalance must be followed by movement toward partnership” (p.10). Other research has found that two factors promoted participation in organizations, which in turn promoted empowerment: one was if the organization was perceived by members to be task-focused; and the other, was if it was perceived to include members in discussions and decisions (McMillan et al., 1995). Thus, a culture of power sharing in the form of participatory decision-making is important to organizational empowerment. Moreover, in

their study McMillan and colleagues found that organizational climate was the strongest variable associated with empowerment of members and the organization itself (1995).

Perkins (1995) describes two forms of organizational empowerment that are directly related to its culture: that of Organizational Development, and Participatory Workplace Democracy. Organizational Development (OD) is a strategy by which the process of change is facilitated within people, organizations, and in technology (Perkins, 1995). Change within people refers to styles of communication, skill development or values. At the organizational level, change could refer to roles, decision-making processes, and work relationships, just to mention a few. OD facilitates the diagnosis of change at the interpersonal, group, and intergroup levels with regards to organizational planning, communication, and decision-making (Friedlander & Brown, 1974, as cited in Perkins, 1995). Amongst many other things, OD theories have touched on organizational climate or culture, which can have a direct effect on workers' moral, job satisfaction, and ownership of the work. Although OD is not directly linked to empowerment, the issues that it addresses are very relevant to empowerment. For example, it was found that perceptions of community members of their organizational climate played a significant role in deciding whether to become active participants in the community organization or not (Prestby et al. 1990). The strong link between participation and empowerment has already been touched on. Another example is that OD encourages respect for oneself and for one's co-workers. Prestby et al. (1990) points out that tension in interpersonal relationships is seen as a "cost", and thus, a hindrance to members' participation.

Participatory Workplace Democracy (PWD) recognizes the value of power sharing and participation by members of the organization. Thus, the culture of the organization is sensitive to unnecessary hierarchies and needless layers of supervision; to the need for team building and participatory decision-making (Perkins, 1995). Moreover, PWD is cognizant of the importance for members to feel ownership for what they do, and thus, take responsibility for their work; to have the opportunity to learn new skills on the job, to have variety, to feel challenged, and to be able to look to the future with new prospective (Perkins, 1995). These strategies help members to feel satisfied and useful,

and to feel a sense of control over what they do, which in turn is closely linked to empowerment. Closely linked to organizational culture and empowerment are what Spreitzer (1995) termed as social structural characteristics that would either enhance or hinder an empowering context.

Spreitzer posed a framework of intrapersonal empowerment in the workplace that examined the relationship of social structural context with behavioral outcomes of innovativeness and effectiveness (1995). She argued that role ambiguity could act as a hindrance to an empowered context. Role ambiguity occurs when individuals are unsure of their authoritative and decision-making boundaries within an organization; when they do not understand how the goals of their unit fits in with the larger picture; and when they are unsure of other peoples' expectation of them in the organization. It was found that elements of role ambiguity could make individuals hesitate to act and to take forward their work (Sawyer, 1992, as cited in Spreitzer, 1995). It is the responsibility of managers and leaders to communicate clear visions, goals and boundaries to overcome this challenge.

Spreitzer also found that access to strategic information and resources could play an effective role in context empowerment (1995). Resources such as funds, materials, space, and time can increase individuals' sense of control over their environment and can create a feeling of empowerment (Zimmerman, 1995, as cited in Spreitzer, 1995). Moreover, access to such resources allows individuals to take initiative in their sphere of work (Hoffman, 1978; Kieffer, 1984, as cited in Spreitzer, 1995). Access to strategic information could include information about workflow, productivity, competition, and top management strategies about the direction for the future of the organization (Lawler, 1992, as cited in Spreitzer, 1995).

In essence, empowerment in the workplace context calls for more transparency of information, specifically information that is usually available only to certain individuals in high-ranking positions. Spreitzer (1995) also identifies sociopolitical support as being a key factor in workplace empowerment. This refers to "endorsement, approval, and

legitimacy from various organizational constituencies” especially from “organizational political networks” (p.608). It is the “interdependence” within the network that creates a feeling of personal power, and conversely, it is the lack of interdependence that can lead to feelings of powerlessness and alienation (Crozier, 1964, as cited in Spreitzer, 1995). An organization’s culture can also affect the sense of community and commitment that members may have towards the organization.

McMillan and his colleagues (1995) argue that individual levels of commitment and identification with the organization are directly linked to perceptions of relationships amongst members, leadership, and the organization’s efficiency. Thus, organizational perceptions is again linked to participatory behavior, which plays an important role in empowerment (Florin & Wandersman, 1984; Kieffer, 1984; Gruber & Trickett, 1987; Riger, 1984; Serrano-Garcia, 1984; Swift & Levin, 1987; Wallerstein, 1992; Zimmerman, 1990, 1995. Zimmerman et al. , 1992, as cited in McMillan et al., 1995). McMillan and Chavis (1986, as cited in Cahvis & Wandersman, 1990) point out that a sense of community can be developed through a process, which “stimulates opportunities for membership, influence, mutual needs to be met, and emotional ties and support” (p.56). An important element in feeling a sense of community is the interaction individuals have with their co-members. It is the face-to face contacts, and the shared emotional connections that mainly create a sense of belonging. Maton and Salem (1995) also found that having a sense of community was important for empowerment across diverse settings. A psychological sense of community was achieved when members gave to and received support from their peers, and when members shared common goals, and when there was an emphasis on group solidarity. Once again, research has found a “strong association” between Psychological Empowerment and individuals’ perceptions of belonging, identifying, and committing to a group that is inclusive and focused on the importance of group effort (McMillan et al., 1995).

There are elements other than a sense of community, an encouraging organizational culture, and inspiring leadership, that can act as an incentive for participation in community organizations, and make way for empowerment. Development of skills has

been identified by Zimmerman (1995) as an important factor of the interactional component of Psychological Empowerment. Specifically skills such as decision-making, problem solving, and leadership play a major role in empowerment. McMillan and colleagues (1995) reiterated the importance of knowledge and skill development for Psychological Empowerment by including this as one of the five constructs in their framework of empowerment in their study. They defined it as “the degree to which individuals feel that participation in the group or organization has served to increase their own knowledge and skills” (p.702). Maton and Salem (1995) found similar results in their study. Organizations were empowering to their members when they provided meaningful opportunities and roles that assisted members to grow, to develop and to participate. Through such skill-building mechanisms, members were able to achieve their own personal goals. Guitierrez and GlenMay (1995) interviewed administrators and workers from six different human service organizations which were engaged in empowerment practise, and found that staff development was one of the key factors in maintaining and facilitating an empowerment approach. Staff development included advanced training, in-service training, educational opportunities and conferences, being encouraged to participate in development of specific skills that would match individuals’ interests, and being rewarded for pursuing self-defined learning goals. Thus, on the one hand, development of skills can act as incentive to active participation in community organizations, and hence, to empowerment; and on the other hand, it can empower individuals to interact with competence and efficacy with their environment.

2.5.2 BARRIERS TO COMMUNITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL EMPOWERMENT

Most of the literature on empowerment has focused on frameworks, components and factors that can enhance empowerment at the individual, community or organizational levels. Few have examined the challenges or barriers to empowerment, especially at the community or organizational levels. Gutierrez and Linnea (1995) identified some barriers to empowerment in their study. The first, was funding challenges. Many voluntary community organizations depend on outside funding for their work. The difficulty

emerges when those who provide the funding have a traditional approach to dealing with the problem. In such cases, funders do not appreciate the necessity of approaching challenges in an empowering way, which is usually time consuming. Moreover, it is very difficult to measure progress, especially incremental ones over time. Significant change, at the individual level is a process that is organic, which means that it has its own time reference and stages of progress. Yet, it is the positive and tangible results that need to be seen if financial support is to be continued.

Secondly, the social environment can be a challenge to empowerment (Gutierrez & Linnea, 1995) if the politics and the philosophies of empowering human service agencies or organizations clash with the more traditional services. Thus, lack of support and networking can hamper empowerment efforts. Competition between similar agencies can have similar effects, especially if funders expect to see collaboration and cooperation between such organizations. Competition within the community can also impede organizational empowerment, as volunteers have limited time and resources to distribute amongst the various organizations.

Another barrier to organizational and community empowerment is that of “old ways” of leadership (Belasco and Stayer, 1994). Paternal leadership exercises power by deciding on the vision and goals for the organization, and consequently, imposing such vision on workers. The style of paternal leadership is controlling and the way leaders interact with workers is based on the assumption that workers are untrustworthy and uneducated. It responds very slowly to change within and outside the setting, and concentrates its efforts on the present and not the future. It tries to rescue workers and situations from problems in the setting, and attempts to have the correct answers, rather than ask the right questions (Balesco & Stayer, 1994). Such behavior from organizational leaders robs members of the opportunity to grow, to develop skills, to feel responsible for their own work and to be creative in their approach to their work. In many ways, it creates an organizational climate that stifles any traces of empowerment.

Speer and Hughey (1995) point out that those who are in positions of social power, have the means to identify challenges or issues that need to be addressed with regard to organizational empowerment. But by the same token, they also have the power and ability to disguise issues or to steal attention away from worthwhile concerns, especially, if addressing such issues may jeopardize their own positions of power. This is one of the reasons for hesitancy in transparency in organizations by people who hold power.

2.6 DEFINITION AND FRAMEWORK USED FOR THIS STUDY

The issues to be examined in this study are varied and complex. It is for this reason that a constructivist paradigm is used. Such an approach takes into account that knowledge is grounded in history and context, and that context can change over time and across settings (Gergen, 1985, Hare- Mustin & Marecek, 1988, as cited in Foster Fishman et al., 1998). The emphasis of the constructivist approach is that individual experiences are merged in personal histories that are the result of particular contexts. Thus, individuals are seen as experts on their own lives. This approach is sensitive to empowerment's dynamics, which emphasizes people, time, and context specificity, and has therefore been chosen for this reason. It is hoped that through the use of this paradigm a deeper understanding will emerge of the degree to which UCT has been successfully empowering its black students.

The framework used for this study is based on the 1995 research conducted by Maton and Salem (See Appendix 1). Their framework is embedded in the ideology that empowerment is a process which enables individuals to achieve their goals through participatory behavior. The purpose of their study was to identify key organizational characteristics that would be empowering in community settings. To achieve this goal, they examined three different contexts: a religious fellowship, a mutual help organization for persons with severe mental illness, and an educational programme for African American students. Their analysis showed that four key empowering characteristics existed amongst all three contexts. They are: “ (a) a belief system that inspires growth, is

strength-based, and is focused beyond the self; (b) an opportunity role structure that is pervasive, highly accessible, and multifunctional; (c) a support system that is encompassing, peer-based, and provides a sense of community; and (d) leadership that is inspiring, talented, shared, and committed to both setting and members” (Maton & Salem, 1995, p. 631).

The belief system refers to the system’s ideology, values or culture. The system must understand the views of its members, and be cognizant of their needs, challenges and potentials in the setting in which they aspire to achieve their goals. Belief system is synonymous with an organization’s culture, in which values and opportunities are put in place to motivate, guide, and sustain the efforts of members. If a culture is inspiring of growth, then it will clearly define goals and ways of achieving those goals. If it is strength-based, it will view its members as assets, capable of achieving those goals. If the organizational culture encourages members to look beyond themselves, it inspires them to broaden their boundaries and to be all embracing of others.

The role structure in the framework refers to the availability of roles that “provide meaningful opportunities for individuals to develop, grow, and participate” (p.643). Rappaport (1981, as cited in Maton & Salem, 1995) found that participatory behavior has two aspects: that of the recipient and the provider. In the recipient roles individuals are given the opportunity to develop competencies; and in the provider role they enhance their sense of self-efficacy by using their skills to help others, and contributing to the organizational goals. In Maton and Salem’s model (1995), pervasive roles refer to the large and varied number of roles available to members at different organizational levels. Highly accessible roles are those that require different levels of responsibility, self-confidence, and skills. As members develop these characteristics, they are encouraged to take on new roles that would be of interest to them. Lastly, multifunctional roles refer to structures that provide the opportunities for members to develop and learn skills, utilize these skills, and exercise some responsibility.

The third empowering characteristic of Maton and Salem's model is that of the support system (1995). This refers to resources within a setting that "contribute to individuals' quality of life and to their ability to deal with stressful life situations" (p.646). An empowering support system can work in two ways: to help members who are not in positions of power to cope with their stressful and challenging situations; and to help members to gain control over their lives so that they can accomplish the goals they have set for themselves. An encompassing support system refers to the variety and diversity of support. Many of these support systems should be peer-based, because peers can relate and identify with each other and each other's challenges better. Lastly, the support system should go beyond just providing support. It should create a sense of community and belonging for members.

The final empowering characteristic of Maton and Salem's model (1995) is that of leadership. Leaders are usually those who have responsibility for a setting or organization. They can affect the setting in two ways: by directly being in contact with members; and by creating an encouraging and empowering culture, through motivation of key individuals in the setting. Leaders are inspirational when they have a clear vision of the goals before them, and they communicate this vision to others in an inspiring way. Moreover, they are able to inspire and motivate others, and are viewed by members as role models who have achieved important goals, and share significant life experiences with other members. Talented leaders can work well with others, and at the same time manage the changes within the organization by mobilizing resources, maintaining the stability of the setting, and responding effectively to external threats. Shared leadership means that the responsibility of leadership is not on the shoulders of one person, but rather, that it is shared, especially as new leaders emerge. Lastly, committed leaders are those who are committed to the setting and to the growth of the members. They encourage participatory behavior, and do not feel threatened by members' involvement in the decision-making process.

Maton and Salem's definition of empowerment as "the active, participatory process of gaining resources or competencies needed to increase control over one's life and

accomplish important life goals” is particularly relevant to the study (1995). One of the important goals of students is to be academically successful, and when graduating, to have learned all the needed skills and knowledge for the arena of work. Using the above mentioned definition and framework of empowerment, this study attempts to examine the degree to which black students are empowered at a tertiary institution, namely, UCT. Thus, the study focuses on the perceptions of black students with regards to the institution’s culture and values, its system of leadership, its support systems, and also its role structure. Although empowerment is a process, it produces certain byproducts and outcomes. In this study, the measured outcome of empowerment for black students at UCT is academic success. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine the individual or psychological factors (such as motivation, a sense of self-efficacy and competence) and their interaction with the present setting. It is hoped that the study will provide a deeper understanding of the challenges that these students face, and the degree to which the present institutional system is being effective and empowering in assisting them to achieve academic success.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1.1 QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE APPROACHES

A multi-method approach was used for the research. The primary approach was qualitative, and the secondary approach was quantitative. The qualitative method used was that of semi-structured interviews, which dealt with topics such as students' perceptions, experiences, and the factors that contributed to their challenges and academic success at the institution. The quantitative methodology consisted of a questionnaire, which included topics such as helpful resources at the university, the level of stress pertaining to various university activities, and the students' perceptions of the university and its staff. The interview protocol and questionnaire used are to be found in Appendix 3.

The main aim of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the degree to which the institution was empowering black students to achieve academic success. This information could assist this institution to provide support better suited to the needs of these students. For any kind of support or intervention to be useful, the needs of the group in question first have to be assessed. As previously mentioned, other research in this area had been quantitative in nature (Hall et al., 1995). Although the data from the quantitative study was useful, it did not provide an in-depth understanding of the issues and possible patterns and connections involved in this area. As ^{*}Miles and Huberman (1994) point out, qualitative approaches to research are the most appropriate methods used when studying people in their natural settings, and finding out about real life events. Moreover, such an approach must be used when trying to understand the meaning of a situation, or discovering latent and subtle issues. The qualitative approach also takes into account the context of the case, which gives meaning to the information collected (Silverman, 1993).

No individual lives in a vacuum; people are embedded in context. In this study, students' experiences were investigated with the view that besides academic experiences, students also have experiences that are social, that include friends, family, residential life, and so on. All these experiences affect the individual and influence academic performance. Therefore, it was imperative to use a method that would be sensitive to this need and thus, the use of a qualitative approach as the primary method for this study.

Semi-structured interviews were used because they allowed the researcher to probe areas of concern, which may have been of a sensitive nature. Although an interview protocol was available, there was room for flexibility in the way the questions were phrased and the order in which they were asked, to accommodate the emotional needs of participants with regards to sensitive issues.

There were several reasons for making use of the quantitative approach. Firstly, it helped to create an understanding of the context in which the students were functioning, which is very important. It provided information regarding the resources that students found valuable at the institution, the types of stress that they experienced while pursuing their degrees, and their perceptions of the institution and its staff. Secondly, the results of the questionnaires acted as a compass, and assisted interviewers to probe in the right direction during the interviews. In essence, the questionnaire prepared the path for the main research method, which was qualitative in-depth interviews.

It was also hoped that the results of the questionnaire would provide triangulation for the main research method. Triangulation refers to a technique in which a construct is examined using two or more different methods. It has been compared to a system of navigation, by which the correct position of a ship is determined by comparing its position with two other navigation points (Huysamen, 1994). The value of triangulation is that it assists in adding construct validity to the research, by giving some indication of whether the measuring instruments used for a certain variable are actually measuring what they are supposed to be measuring. It can be said that the more similar the results

from the different methodology used for the same construct, the higher the level of construct validity in the research.

3.1.2 BACKGROUND INTERVIEWS

At the formulation stage of the research, some time was spent on informally interviewing people within the various university structures. The purpose was to gain a general understanding of the way the university functioned, the type of structures and systems it had, and how these structures were created; and lastly, what the perceptions were of the black students. The registrar at the university was approached to understand the vision of the university for its students, and how, and by whom such a vision had been created. A psychologist at Student Health was approached to get a better understanding of the issues and challenges that many students seemed to be dealing with, especially black students. An officer at the Transformation Forum was interviewed about the programs and systems of support which were being put in place at the institution to especially help students from academically disadvantaged backgrounds. A staff member from the Student Services Centre was approached to gain an understanding of the type of non-academic support systems available to students at the institution, and the main challenges that she felt black students were faced with. A warden of a residence was interviewed about the structures within the residences and the way they are run, and possible challenges that black students could be facing. The coordinator of the Academic Development Program (ADP) for the Bachelor of Commerce degree was also approached to gain a deeper understanding of the way the ADP functioned, its successes and challenges, and the difficulties facing black students. Finally, the Dean of the Centre for Higher Education and Development, a faculty responsible for ADPs, was interviewed twice about the academic and non-academic challenges facing black students.

The information gained from these interviews later helped to choose the methodology, and later on, to formulate some of the questions in the interviews and the questionnaires. It also assisted in shedding light on the context in which students were functioning.

3.1.3 QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The framework of empowerment characteristics used for this study was that of the one developed by Maton and Salem (1995). Dr. Maton was contacted and permission was obtained to use and to also adapt the questionnaire and interview questions used for their study. Maton and Salem's questions were both general and specific. They assessed the level of empowerment of a black American support programme, called the Meyhoff Programme, at a predominantly white university in the United States. The specific questions related to the Meyhoff Programme were replaced with specific questions about UCT, and questions that related to black students in the South African context.

The questions were reviewed by the researcher and the supervisor to ensure that they were not too long, that their meaning was clear, and that they were not difficult to read. It was also ensured that there were no double-barrelled questions, which refers to two different issues being examined through the use of only one question (DeVellis, 1991). The Likert Scale was used to assess students' opinions and attitudes in the questionnaires. As DeVellis points out, the Likert Scale is the optimum type of scale used when trying to measure people's opinions and beliefs (1991). The interviews started with general questions in order to make students feel comfortable, and they ended with questions that generally summarized the interview.

3.1.4 INTERVIEWERS

The study aimed to provide a deep understanding of complex issues in the lives of black students at the institution. To achieve this purpose it was felt that it would be important to be sensitive to the gender and culture of those being interviewed. It was felt that black males may not feel all that comfortable to share their personal experiences with a white female researcher, especially if the experiences that they would want to share required empathy with regard to issues of being male and being black. Indeed, Huysamen (1994) cautions researchers to be mindful of the South African context. He argues that black research participants may give false information to white researchers should they feel a

lack of trust in the relationship, due to the years of segregation and difficulties. Therefore, two black male postgraduate students were trained by the researcher to assist with the interviews. The purpose of the study, and the issues surrounding the research were shared with them in detail. They were also trained in the rules of good interviewing, of how to be sensitive to the participants' needs, of how to probe and what to probe for. The researcher closely monitored the process and directly supervised a number of the interviews.

3.1.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Ethics Council of the university reviewed the research topic and methodology, and permission was granted to carry out the research. All students were approached to participate in the study on a voluntary basis, and were given the understanding that their answers would remain confidential. Moreover, during the interviews, the students were not pressed to share any experiences which they wished to keep to themselves. Their boundaries were respected. The study posed no harm to the students, and tried to be sensitive to their background and culture.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

3.2.1 THE SAMPLE

This study focuses on a finite sample, namely black male students at this institution. Several reasons existed for choosing such a focused sample. Firstly, one of the most significant findings of the pilot research conducted at this institution was that it was predominantly black male students who felt the greatest frustration and alienation at the institution, and who were doing poorly academically (Hall et al., 1995) Therefore, there was a natural, pre-determined grouping from which to draw a sample. Secondly, only male students were invited to participate in this study because the researcher wished to avoid gender issues compounding the research. It is possible that black female students may have different perceptions from black male students of the institution's leadership,

support systems, role structures, and belief systems. Thus, the institution's empowering interventions may have affected them in different ways. The focus on male students enables the research to examine the issue of empowerment solely from a racial perspective, free from other issues that could affect the results of the study. It should however be noted that the results from such a focused sample are restrictive, and may not necessarily be generalizable or applicable to female black students at the institution.

It was decided that it would be useful to examine the experience of students who would already have had two years in the ADP and six months in the mainstream program to observe the adjustments that the students may have had to make during this transition. Moreover, by their third year of study, students would have had the opportunity to investigate and make use of the various resources available to them at the institution. This was more appropriate than sampling first year students, as they would possibly still be adjusting to university life and not had exposure to the support system available. There were twenty two black male students in the ADP Bachelor of commerce degree. Their addresses were obtained from the faculty of Commerce and they were written a letter, in which the purpose of the research, and the way the research would be conducted was explained to them. Sixteen students agreed to participate.

3.2.2 THE COLLECTION OF DATA

Appointments were made ahead of time with the participants. A quiet room at the university was used to conduct the research. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, along with the potential value of the information in facilitating empowerment strategies. The participants were assured of confidentiality. Thereafter the questionnaire was administered with interviewers available to clear up any ambiguity regarding any questions. After the completion of the questionnaire, some time was taken to ensure that all questions had been completed, and note was made of various answers that could be probed during the in-depth interviews. Then the interviews took place, which were recorded on audiotapes, and later transcribed.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

3.3.1 ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS

A thematic analysis was done of the transcriptions of the interviews. Colour and number coding was used to achieve the purpose. The framework of empowering characteristics by Maton and Salem (1995) was used to code the material. In addition to this, other themes that seemed to be emerging were also noted and bound into various groups. Thus, the end result of the thematic analysis yielded two sets of data: data in relation to Maton and Salem's (1995) framework; and other emerging themes, which were mainly related to specifics of the institution in which the research was carried out, and issues related to the South African context.

3.3.2 ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

Most of the questions were quantitatively analyzed, by being coded and then charted on a spreadsheet. Frequency tables were generated and the mean of each question was formulated. Figures of significant results are presented in the body of this document. The remaining data can be found in Appendix 2. Questions sixteen and seventeen in the first section of the questionnaire which related to mentorship at the institution, were thematically analyzed and the results are available in the results section of this document.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of both the thematic analysis of the in-depth interviews, and the questionnaires. In the first part of the chapter the results will be presented in the context of Maton and Salem's framework (1995). The themes and sub-themes are briefly explained before the results are presented. The latter part of the chapter deals with emerging themes that are specific to the South African context or that of the institution in question. These emerging themes did not fit into the framework of Maton and Salem (1995), but added value to the research topic.

4.1 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Out of the twenty-two students (hereafter referred to as participants) who were invited to participate in this study, sixteen participated. This is a return rate of seventy three percent. The mean age of the participants was 22.4 years, and the age range was from twenty to twenty seven years. All the listed participants lived in university residences. All participants spoke a language other than English as their first language. Although as much as eighty one percent of participants stated that their preferred language of communication was English, this does not necessarily indicate that their level of mastery of the English language was sufficient to meet their needs at a tertiary institution. All participants were born in, and attended schools in rural areas. The majority of the parents of these participants had had no educational training in a tertiary institution, which meant that they could offer little guidance to their children with regard to academic material, and successfully dealing with challenges at the university. The above information supports the contention that participants had received a relatively disadvantaged education.

4.2 RESULTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FRAMEWORK

The following results were identified according to Maton and Salem's framework of organizational characteristics common to empowering community settings (1995).

4.2.1 GROUP-BASED BELIEF SYSTEM

The belief-system is related to the institution's values and culture. It views the needs, the challenges and the potential of its members, and provides structures and settings that assist members to achieve the desired goals. Moreover, it provides members with opportunities for growth, and motivates, guides and supports members change efforts. At UCT, the members of the institution are its students, and its academic and administrative staff. This study, however, is limited to examining only a section of the institution's members: namely, the students.

INSPIRING GROWTH:

This refers to the culture or belief system of the institution, in which goals, and the means by which those goals can be achieved are clearly defined.

The majority of the participants did not clearly know the goals or the mission of the institution for its students. Most of them guessed that the aim of the university was to teach them knowledge and skills to enable them to find good jobs. Skills such as leadership skills, time-management skills, computer literacy skills, and the skills of being able to easily interact with people were valued for this end. Very few participants reported academic excellence as one of the goals of UCT.

Some participants expressed the view that the culture of UCT lacked sensitivity to the black student population, and was at times even racist. It was felt that more room needed to be made for black African expression at UCT, and that diversity management and integration could be improved. It must be noted that the perception was that there was a

difference between the culture of UCT as a whole and its residences. The residences were perceived to be more tolerant of black African expressions.

With regard to making available “clear means” by which students were enabled to achieve the goals, participants were aware of some of the resources that the university provided, but again, they were not very clear about all the resources available. However, even though the participants were aware of some of the resources available to them, such as the library, many of these resources were not used.

The majority of the participants also felt that the ADP had not really taught them the skills they felt they needed to do academically well in the mainstream, and thus, had not given them clear means by which to achieve their goals. Once they entered the mainstream they were overwhelmed by the relatively heavy academic workload. Participants suggested that the ADP needed to be more organized, and should make students aware of the challenges of the mainstream programme awaiting them.

A number of participants also thought that there was a lack of guidance and services from the university, specifically related to course counselling. They were confused about the logical sequence of courses that needed to be taken for their degree, and the consequences of taking the courses in a sporadic way. They felt that they needed guidance about the content of courses, and when to take the courses. The information in the booklet from the faculty, and speaking to administrative staff was not enough to satisfy their questions:

“I think the guidance as well...I don't know where to go to for instance- it's like continuing my courses...I mean the questions that I have- I don't know who to ask...right now the second semester, I need really advice with my courses, because it's like stressful, what to do now- I mean which courses to add, or something...Okay, I've got the booklet...but there are other questions which I have, I mean they can't even answer on that booklet. So that really was really stressful for me.”

STRENGTH BASED:

This refers to the perception that the institution has of its members. “Strength-based” indicates that it perceives them as having the capability to achieve the institution’s goals, and also as being a valuable resource by helping others to succeed, and to maintain a high reputation of the institution.

More than half the participants believed that the university staff and administrators had the perception that the students were capable of doing well in their studies (Figures 1 & 2).

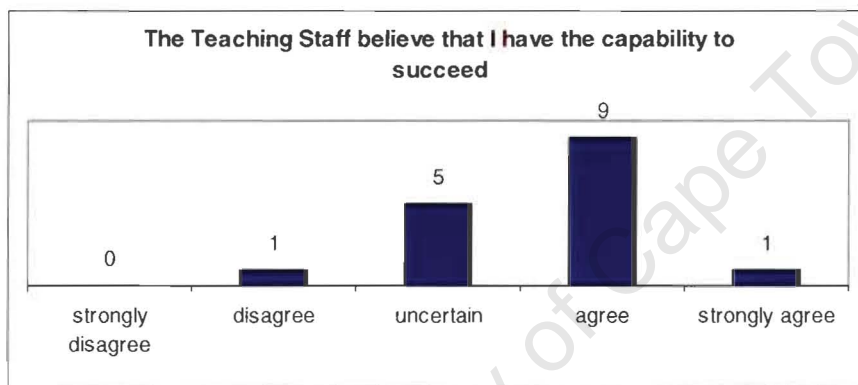


Figure 1: THE CAPACITY TO SUCCEED: TEACHING STAFF

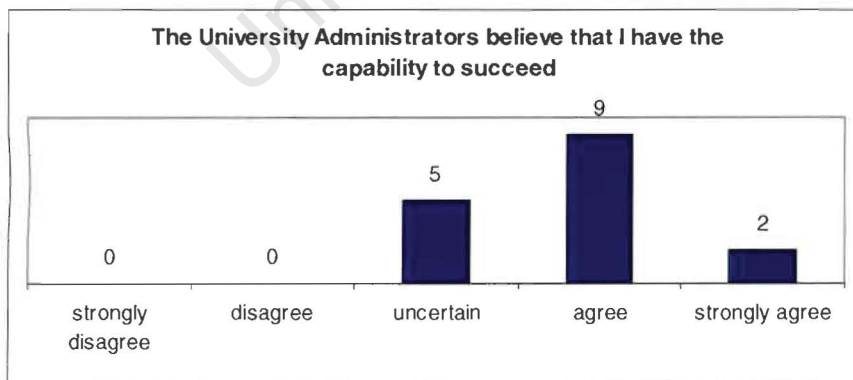


Figure 2: THE CAPACITY TO SUCCEED: ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

However, some of the participants felt that it was the general perception at the university that white students were more clever than black students, and this affected their self-confidence and thus, they kept quiet during lectures and tutorials. Only about a quarter of the sample thought that the university staff and administrators had the perception that students were a resource to the university (Figures 3 & 4).

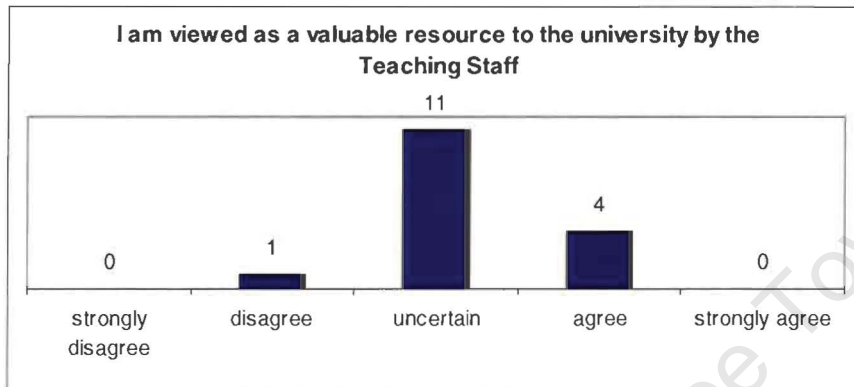


Figure 3: PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING STAFF

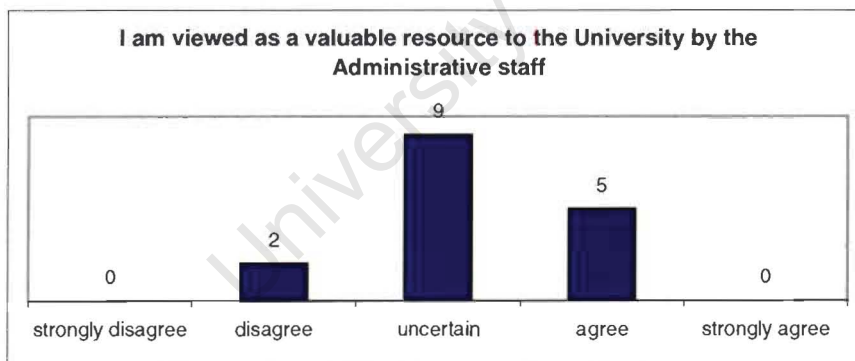


Figure 4: PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

BASED BEYOND THE SELF:

This refers to the institution’s encouragement of members to think beyond themselves, as part of a larger humanity. Just less than twenty percent of the sample did not believe that the university encouraged students to think more widely than their studies (Figure 5). For

many of the participants, coming to UCT gave them a unique opportunity, as it was their first time to interact with people other than their own race. Thus, in this way UCT had broadened their circle to include diversity. However, some students expressed concern at the lack of integration at the social level, which hampered their sense of loyalty to the larger community at UCT.

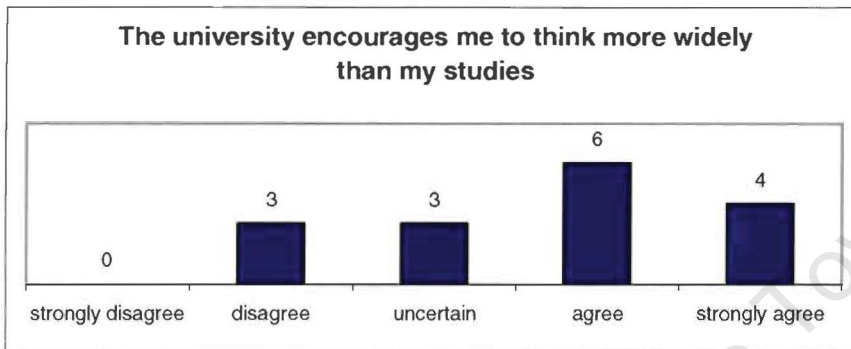


Figure 5: BROADENING VIEWS

4.2.2 OPPORTUNITY ROLE STRUCTURE

This refers to the availability of roles within the institution that enhance individual participation, growth and development. Such meaningful opportunities build skills that in turn increase members' self efficacy and competencies, and encourage active participation within the institution.

PERVASIVE:

This refers to numerous roles available to members at varying levels of the institution. Such roles could be within study groups, internship programmes, and service oriented projects.

87.5 percent of participants thought that the university provided them with a large number of roles at various levels of the organization, which provided many opportunities for self-development (Figure 6 & 7).

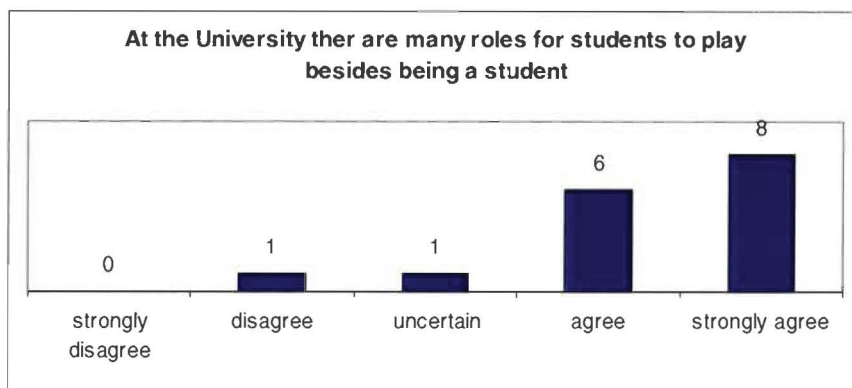


Figure 6: AVAILABILITY OF VARIOUS ROLES

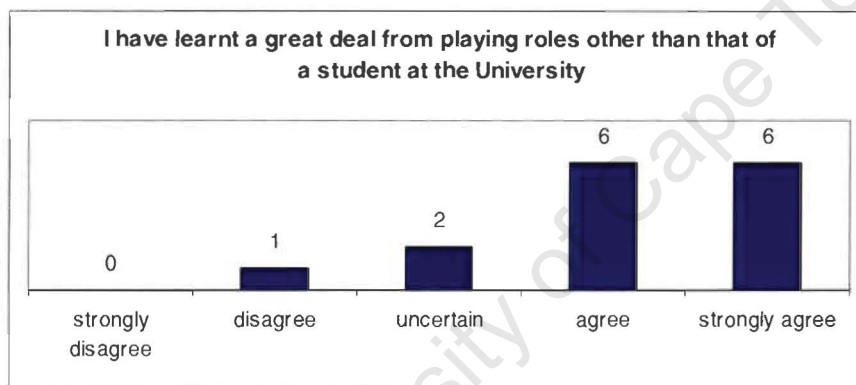


Figure 7: LEARNING EXPERIENCE FROM ROLES

Those participants who reported being involved in such roles, also reported a sense of belonging and a feeling of achievement. However, whereas, in the Meyehoff Programme of Maton and Salem’s study such a system encouraged the formation of study groups, (Maton & Hrabowski, 1995, as cited in Maton & Salem, 1995, p.645) in which students were “provided tremendous motivation” not to “otherwise deviate from their studies and succumb to social activities or to procrastination”, at UCT the results were not so promising. The role structure at UCT was reported to be widely available, but it did not encourage participants to develop themselves with the aim of improving their academic standing. Most of the roles provided participants with opportunities for socialization and financial gain.

HIGHLY ACCESSIBLE:

This refers to roles, which require varying levels of responsibility, being accessible to members. These roles require different levels of skills, responsibilities, and self-confidence, and members are encouraged to take on new roles as they develop themselves.

The perception of participants was that such roles were easily accessible, and required varying skills. Students reported that the majority of these roles were available through university clubs and various jobs at the institution, such as being a residence receptionist. Very few participants reported being aware of more academically inclined roles being available to them, such as roles offered in internship programmes and summer research programmes.

MULTIFUNCTIONAL:

By multifunctional it is meant that the role structures provide many levels of responsibility, and opportunities for members to develop and use their skills.

Seventy five percent of the participants thought that they had learnt a great deal from being involved in such role structures, and 87.5 percent of them thought that they could apply their newly learnt skills to various situations (Figure 8).

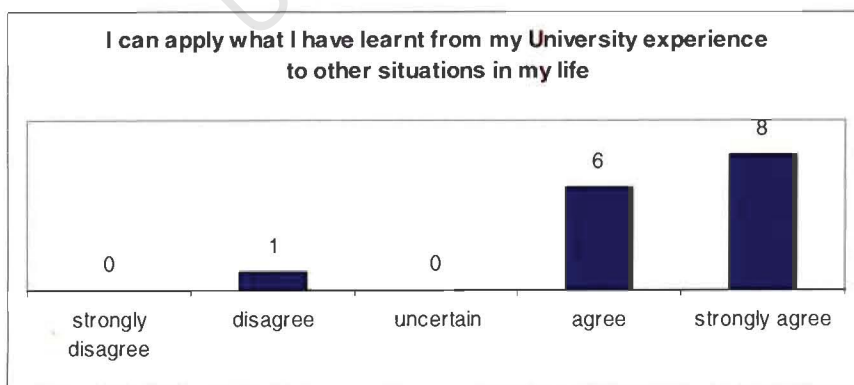


Figure 8: ADAPTIBILITY OF SKILLS

4.2.3 SUPPORT SYSTEM

The Support system, refers to resources within an institution that make a contribution towards the quality of life, and also assist members to deal with stressful situations. The system works in two ways: it supports people who lack power and thus face many challenges in their lives by directly assisting them with disempowering conditions. Secondly, the system offers support to those who are trying to exert control over their lives and to achieve their goals.

ENCOMPASSING:

This refers to support from the institution that is wide in variety, and offered through various channels, both formal and informal. Moreover, the support system is both proactive and reactive. It provides support to members, monitoring their needs, and tailoring the support to suit the needs as they emerge.

Almost all the participants felt that the university had many resources that they could take advantage of, both in the social and the academic arena. Thus the perception was that the support system at the institution was encompassing.

An overwhelming number of participants reported that computer facilities at the university had been very helpful with regard to their academic studies. This was also supported by the results of the questionnaire (Figure 9). Many of the participants knew very little, if anything at all about computers when they came to the university. Computer literacy and having access to the Internet was perceived as having made a great contribution in terms of being better equipped to find a job in the future.

Equally important to participants were the tutorials services at the university, which was also validated by the results of the questionnaire (Figure 9). They found these services helpful, and felt that in many cases they could ask questions or approach the tutors for help.

Value of Support Mechanisms at the University

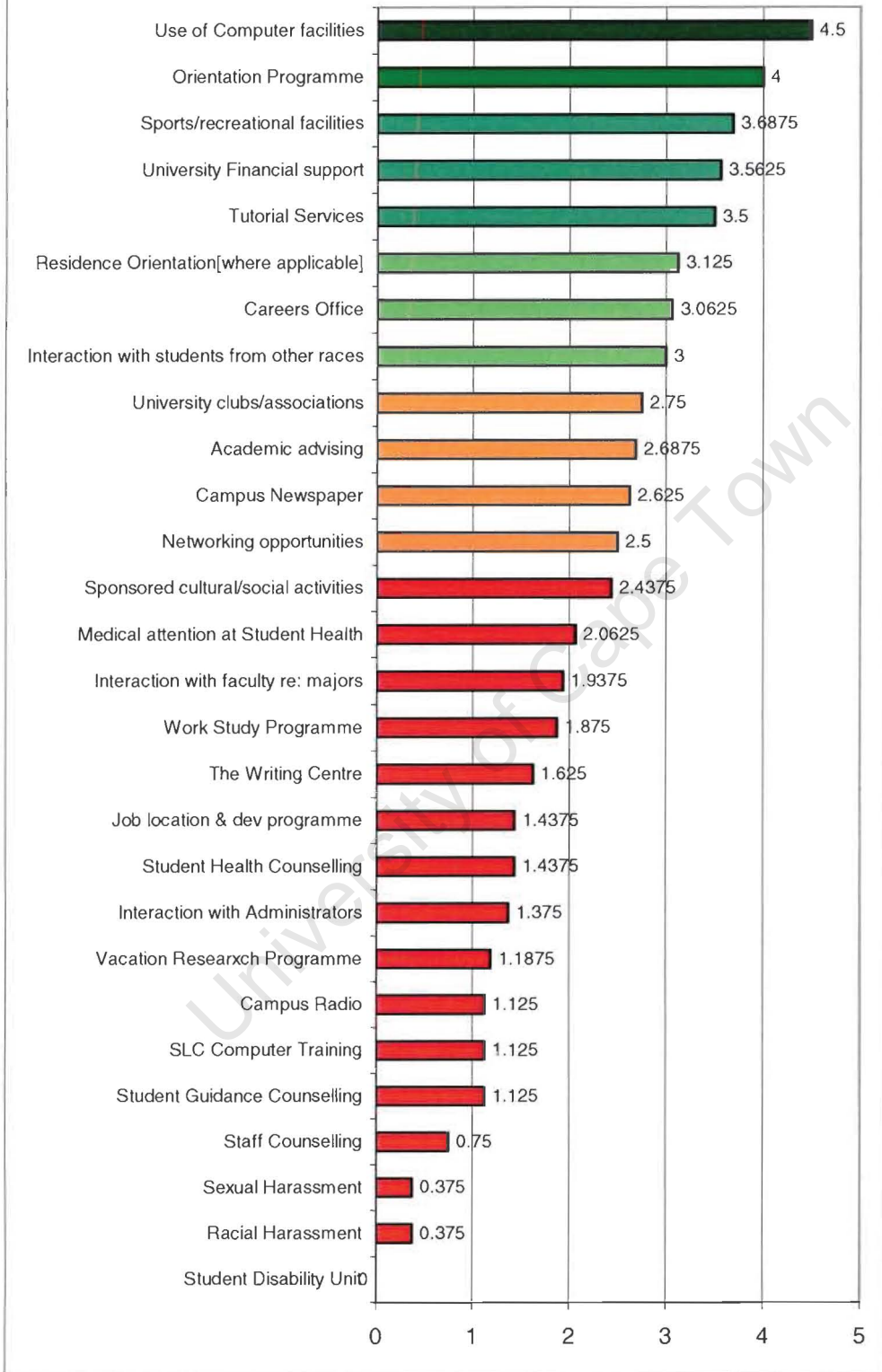


Figure 9 : VALUE OF SUPPORT MECHANISMS

The majority of the participants had financial difficulties. For many of them, the university had assisted them financially in the first year of their studies. Even so, they had to pay some of the tuition themselves, which was very difficult for them. The major financial problems began to affect the students from their second year at the university. They were not able to register for the second year of study until they had fulfilled their financial obligations to the university for their first year of study. Thus, even well into the first semester, participants were uncertain of their status at the university. Moreover, due to the lack of funds, some of the participants were unable to buy the required textbooks for the courses until most of the semester had passed. They had to rely on lecture notes and tutorials to understand the material at hand. Having spent their funds on paying for tuition and books, very little money remained for food and even less for entertainment. The participants faced with such financial pressure found their situation stressful and depressing. This finding was also supported by the results of the questionnaire, in which participants reported high levels of stress due to financial challenges (Figure 10).

To add to this problem, many of the participants also failed many of their courses while at university, which meant that they had to repeat the course and spend more money. Participants complained that there were no clear criteria from the university regarding bursaries for students in their second and third year of study, and that bursaries were granted in a haphazard way. The only participants who seemed to be coping financially were those who had managed to find full bursaries from companies that had hired them to work during their holidays.

The large majority of participants had found the ADP helpful. Participants reported that the ADP had taught them to work with others in groups, had taught them to be independent, and to a lesser degree had taught them time-management skills. But the majority of the participants found ADP valuable as a stepping-stone, because it gave them the opportunity to be accepted to study at the University of Cape Town. Participants also found the ADP orientation useful, as it gave participants the opportunity to get to

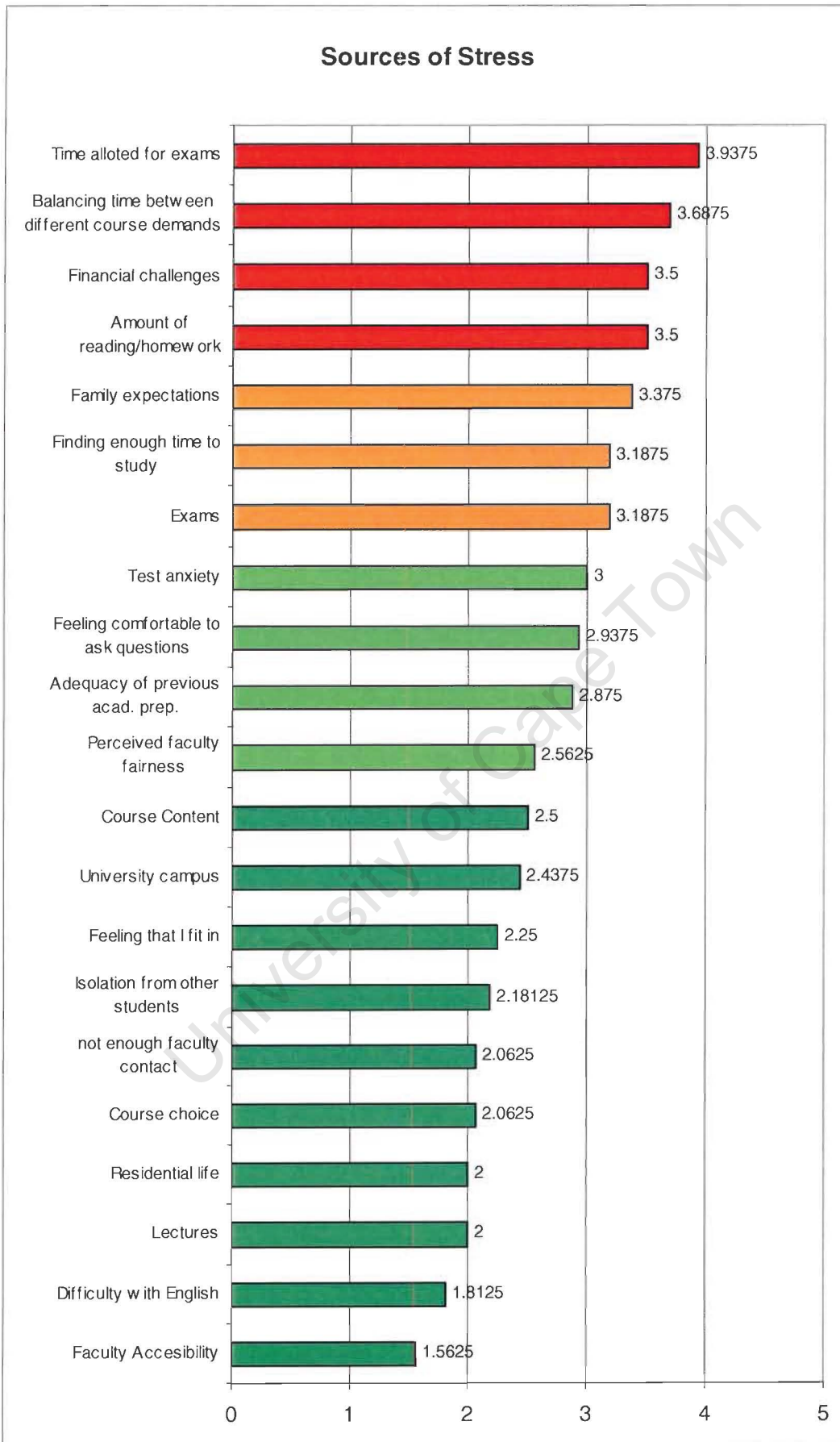


Figure 10: SOURCES OF STRESS

know staff and students, and the university facilities before the semester officially began. This finding was also validated by the results of the questionnaire, in which participants on average found the orientation programme very useful (Figure 9).

On a more negative note, most of the participants felt that although ADP had been useful, it had not prepared them for the mainstream Commerce programme. Some participants stated that the ADP "makes you lazy", because firstly the material is not all that challenging, and secondly, the course work is spread over two years instead of one. The participants' perceptions were that the ADP makes students relax because of the slow pace of the studies, and that students then feel overwhelmed when they have to face the comparative heavy workload of the mainstream. The majority of the participants wished that they could get the special attention they received when in ADP, during the other years of study as well. Closely related to this was also the issue of monitoring academic progress. Whereas in the ADP participants' progress was closely monitored, and assistance was offered when struggling, no such support system continued to exist in the mainstream. Participants were expected to be responsible to monitor their own academic progress. Participants found this difficult to cope with:

"I think this should start from the first year until like your last year, because like you go to school, we are from the disadvantaged school- you go to school like for 10 or 12 years, then you just come here one year- they assume that you are well prepared for the mainstream."

There were, however, a small number of participants who felt very negatively towards the ADP. They felt that the ADP carries a negative stigma, and that it is known to be a programme for academically disadvantaged students, who may not be as "clever" as other students in the mainstream:

"ADP- well, I think- well, okay I think it must be demolished, you know, it's like...there mustn't be an ADP anymore. You know- ja - there must just be a mainstream thing.

Cause if you get put in the ADP, you know you feel like, you know people of the mainstream are better than you, you know, so you feel down, and feel like - er...when people ask you, "what are you studying?" you know - "Okay, I'm doing B.Comm." "Oh mainstream?" "No, ADP". "Huh!" so they...put you down, you know."

In addition, some participants felt that the ADP encouraged racial isolation, as the majority, if not all of the students in the ADP are black. Interaction with and learning from students from other racial backgrounds was important to the sample, and this result was confirmed by the results of the questionnaire, in which participants reported that interaction with students from other races was helpful (Figure 9).

Many participants reported being happy in the residence because they had friends in the same residence, and this gave them a sense of "home" or community. Residence life was reported to be conducive to socializing and friendships. However, many participants also complained that it was difficult to study at the residence because it was too noisy. They complained of students getting drunk, of relatives and friends visiting for long hours from the townships or other institutions and making a great deal of noise:

"...because you find that people visit you and they stay for a long time, and then you don't get to study...res shouldn't be a place to chat all the time, it should be a place where you can study, and stay back home."

Although the support system at the institution was perceived to be comprehensive, only half the sample reported that the support system actually met their needs (Figure 11).

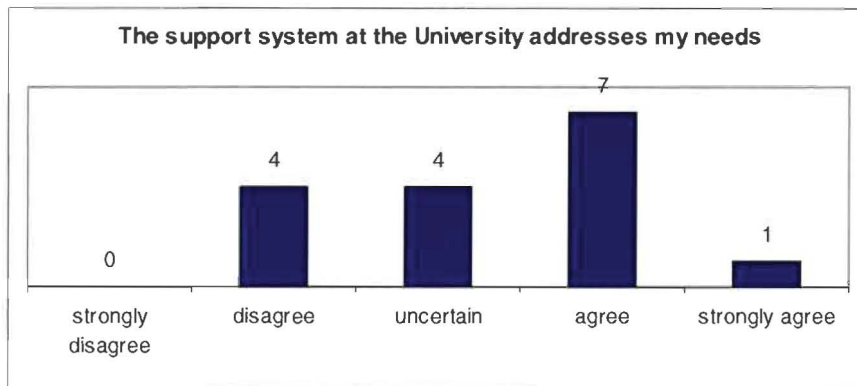


Figure 11: UNIVERSITY SUPPORT SYSTEM

It is important to note that even though the majority of the participants were experiencing various challenges in their personal and academic lives, the formal systems of counselling at UCT were reported not to be of much value to them, as indicated in Figure 9.

PEER-BASED:

The support system of the framework is largely peer-based. Support is given and received from those who share the same academic goals, similar academic problems, and shared ethnicity. Examples of such peer-base support are study groups and friendships, by which high levels of academic and emotional support is received. Such a support system plays a critical role within the general system.

A large number of participants reported that they both received support from, and gave support to their peers (Figures 12 & 13). Such support was mainly social and emotional, and to a much lesser extent, academic. Participants felt that they could turn to their friends for encouragement and for sharing their difficulties and challenges, such as having failed a course, or lost a family member.

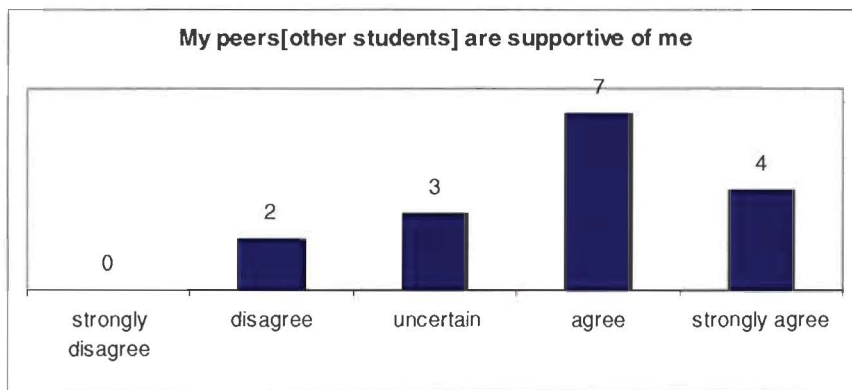


Figure 12: PEERS ARE SUPPORTIVE

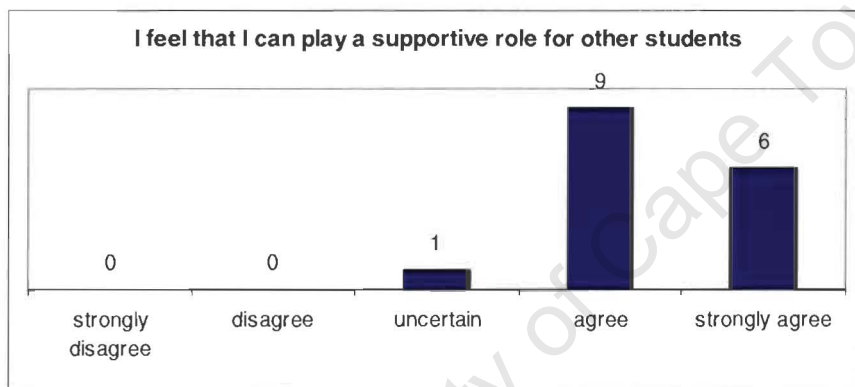


Figure 13: PLAYING A SUPPORTIVE ROLE

Although friendships were valuable, some of the participants reported that their friends would often distract them from their studies, by compelling them to go out, to have fun and to socialize. The opinion was that this was especially true for first year students who were eager to find friends and to belong to a group. Most of the time the students would drink alcoholic drinks together when socializing. The peer pressure to fit in by taking part in drinking sprees, and also the newly found freedom of first year students from their parents meant that a high number of black male students spent time socializing and drinking together. This would cause many problems for other students who wished to study in a quiet atmosphere.

Peer pressure did not only demand drinking of alcoholic beverages. As one participant expressed, it went beyond that:

“Since I arrived at the university, I found that we black students, particularly from the previously disadvantaged communities, we tend to change our identity as soon as we arrive at the university...and by fitting in you find that it is time consuming, because in a way it's a burden, it consumes much of your time to try to fit in there, whereas some of the academic work, you lose it in a way.”

Some participants indicated that they missed working in groups, as they had done in the ADP, and felt quite alone and on their own. Some felt that study groups should be mandatory, as individual attempts to form study groups had failed. They also thought that study groups were a good way for students to learn things from each other. This result was also supported by the results from the questionnaire, in which 87.5 percent of the sample indicated that they would find it helpful to be part of a study group (Figure 14).

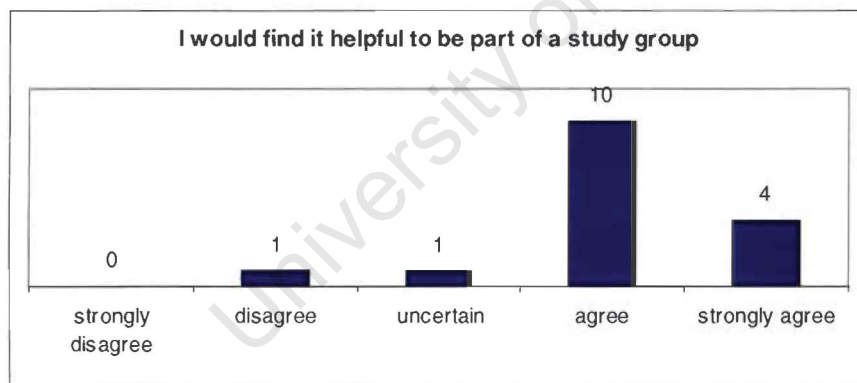


Figure 14: USEFULNESS OF STUDY GROUPS

Closely related to this topic was the need for peer-based mentors. Eighty one percent of the sample felt a need for such a system, but there was a lack of such a support mechanism at UCT. It seemed that such a program was available during ADP some time ago, but that it no longer exists. Participants thought that peer-based mentors could assist

them with their academic and social challenges, and further, to guide participants with helpful tips about how to succeed academically at the university:

“...if the varsity could organize something like, maybe once a month or once a term, maybe a social where someone is speaking on how to behave at varsity, what things to watch out for and all those things.”

The above results regarding peer-based mentors was confirmed by the results of the questionnaire (Figure 15).

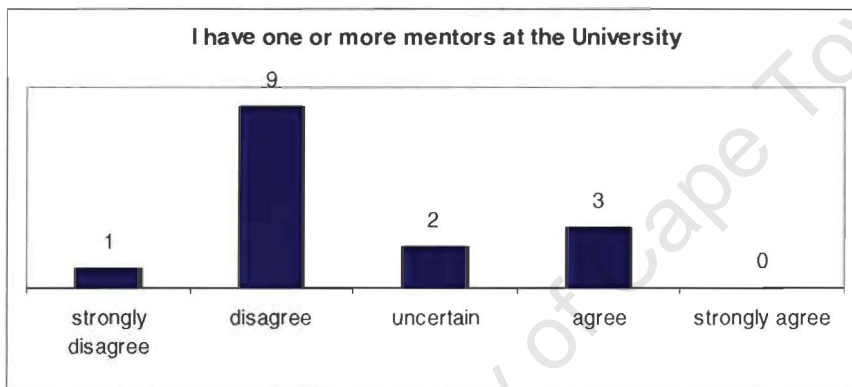


Figure 15: MENTORSHIP AT THE INSTITUTION

In questions sixteen and seventeen of the questionnaire students identified six areas in which a mentor could be helpful: teaching time-management skills, helping with career counselling, providing information regarding financial assistance from the university, guidance about how to approach studies, assistance with adjustment to university life, and encouragement. The majority of the participants thought the greatest asset that students need in order to be a mentor, was their academic and social experiences over the years at the university. Knowledge in cultural diversity, and knowledge of the various systems at UCT were also thought to be helpful assets to mentors. It must be noted that some of the participants found questions sixteen and seventeen irrelevant, as they felt that they had

had no mentors at the institution, and therefore, could not draw on their personal experience.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY:

This refers to a feeling of belonging at the institution. It is created by shared goals, common ethnicity and emphasis on group solidarity. Members take the same courses, live near each other, and belong to the same social network. Moreover, members of staff are viewed as parental figures that provide support and guidance to the members.

The majority of the participants reported feeling a sense of community or belonging at the university. This finding was verified by the results of the questionnaire, in which eighty one percent of the sample felt a sense of community or belonging at the university (Figure 16).

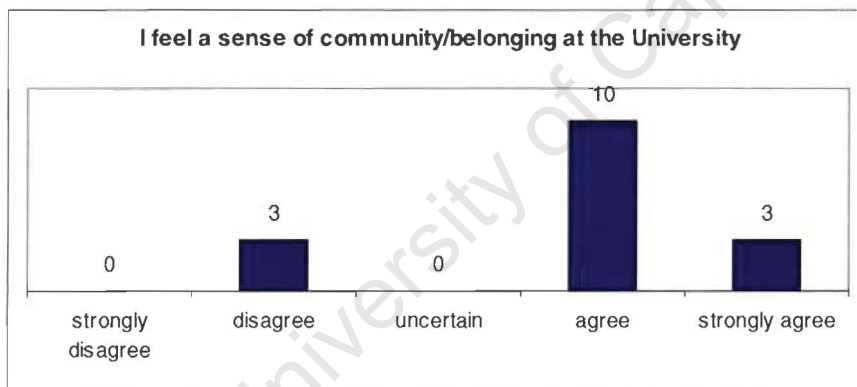


Figure 16: FEELINGS OF BELONGING

Friendships and residential life were indicated to be primary factors affecting a sense of community. Most of the participants thought that friends had made a great positive contribution to their experience at the university. Such a contribution was made in mainly three ways. Friends helped participants to feel a sense of community or belonging at the university, so that they did not feel alone. Usually the friends shared the same culture or spoke the same language and enjoyed doing things together that made them feel a sense of community: " people I interact with, they make me feel like I'm at home". Sometimes

participants turned to their friends for help with their academic challenges, such as not understanding lecture material, or sharing textbooks for example. The challenge was that many black students dropped out of university at one stage or another, mainly because of lack of funds or poor academic marks. Thus, some of the participants felt that they could not rely a great deal on friendships as there was no guarantee that their friends would be present at the university until the completion of their degree.

Some participants reported that being part of a small residence was very helpful in making friends and feeling a sense of belonging, as opposed to large residence, in which it would be more challenging for students to function as a family. Interestingly, it was also reported that a window of opportunity existed during the beginning of each year, especially at the time of orientation, when it was much easier to make friends. Some students felt that if that window of opportunity was missed, they would have to wait until next year to be able to make good friends.

Participants also reported that it made a big difference to them if the lecturers knew them as individuals, rather than one of the students in the class. It made the participants feel a sense of belonging at the university:

“Yes, it is one of the things that can make me feel like I am at home, because you know that at least there is someone who cares about you, who would always like to see you being successful, who is always there for you when like you face difficult times...because she is a kind of a person who always wants to know how you are doing...like she makes them feel like she cares about them, so I think that students need that kind of love from the staff members.”

Unfortunately such a relationship did not exist between most participants and teaching staff.

Participants also felt that it was important to spend time to get to know the campus, and also to show personal initiative in getting to know people at the university in order to feel a sense of belonging at the university.

It must be noted, however, that there were a few participants who felt alienated at the university, and who did not feel a sense of community:

“...And most of the time, when we are here it's like you are alone. You know I've been to Rhodes University and I saw how social the people there are, how together they are. But here it's like everyone is minding his own business...It's been a harsh time here, studying you know, it's really difficult.”

4.2.4 LEADERSHIP

Leadership refers to both formal and informal channels of empowerment at the institution. There are two ways of empowerment: to directly inspire members, and to empower others who have a great deal of contact with members. Formal leaders at UCT are the teaching and administrative staff. The informal leaders are peers, mentors, and other students in roles such as coordinators of study groups.

INSPIRATIONAL:

Leaders have a clear vision of how to accomplish their goals. They are inspirational to others, and can motivate people. They share many common significant life experiences with members, have achieved salient goals of the institution, and can be said to be role models.

Only a small fraction of the sample found the leadership at the university to be inspirational. The perception was that university leaders were communicating no vision to participants. Some of the participants felt that the university discriminated against black students. An example was given of what was perceived to have been a previously

black residence, that was upgraded and a shuttle service made available only after white students were assigned to the place. There was also the perception that the resources the university makes available to an almost all white rugby team are substantially more than to an all black soccer team.

Moreover, many of the participants complained of the lack of black role models and lecturers, with whom they could identify. It was indicated that such lecturers would act as a role model for these participants, and would truly understand their backgrounds and their challenges:

“Maybe we can feel at home. Maybe we can. There are black lecturers, but not enough. There is no one that I know in Commerce. I do not think so....maybe we will feel more at home if we see some of our brothers lecturing us.”

“Normally you join a society, and then sometimes you see black people there, maybe it's in high positions, and you get encouraged. You think to yourself 'maybe it's possible. Maybe I can also be something'”.

There was a perception that the language or style of black lecturers would not be difficult to understand. Lastly, a number of participants commented that it was important for the ADP coordinator to be someone of the same background, who would not only listen to their complaints and difficulties, but would also be able to understand and empathize with them:

“ADP should be run [by] someone like from a sort of like disadvantaged like background. Someone now who has a sense of how does it feel to be from down there.”

In the past, participants felt uncomfortable to approach the coordinator because they felt that they firstly had to justify their grievances to the coordinator before being taken seriously:

“...the management of ADP- if you are going to recruit black students, why do you put a white person there?...Many students are complaining about it - I do not know why, but I think they would prefer someone like you that they can identify with, where they can go back to complain, saying that we are not satisfied with this or that.... So if you have something that you want to complain about, let's say it's the lecturer, the only person I can go to is ...- but I'm afraid just expressing myself- I am afraid when I go there- she is going to ask me questions as well- that is the main issue!”

TALENTED:

Leaders are talented organizationally and interpersonally. They work well with others and encourage members. They can relate to diverse members, mobilize resources, maintain the stability of the institution, and encourage change. They also respond quickly to external threats.

On the whole, participants reported having a difficult time engaging with university lecturers. At times, they reported university staff to be biased and even racist. Participants did not find the leadership at the university to be talented interpersonally or organizationally. They thought that lecturers were not cognizant of the difficulties that participants faced when coming from an educationally disadvantaged background; and that they did not truly care about the participants, but wished to do their job as quickly as possible. One participant commented that he would engage with his lecturer only in extreme circumstances, after all other avenues had been exhausted. The resources made available to students by the university leaders only addressed the needs of half the sample.

SHARED:

Leadership is shared rather than resting with only one person. As new leaders emerge, the system encourages expansion of the position.

The perception of most participants was that people of all racial backgrounds did not equally share leadership at the university. It was difficult for the participants to relate to the existing leadership at the institution.

COMMITTED:

Leaders are committed to the development of members and to the institution. As members' needs are identified, resources are quickly mobilized to ensure successful results. They encourage members to actively participate in institutional activities, and welcome their ideas.

The participants' perceptions regarding university leaders' commitment to the setting and to its members was inconclusive. Some students thought that the staff had been caring and supportive, and other students thought that the staff were overburdened with too much work, and thus tried to do the basic minimum of what was required of them. As mentioned before, many of the ADP participants felt stressed because their academic performance was no longer being monitored, and they felt that assistance with regard to their academic challenges was not being offered.

Lastly, there was also a perception that resident wardens could have been more involved with the challenges that the participants faced. A large number of participants thought that the sub-wardens were ineffective in their duties, and that they favored their friends rather than carrying out their duties.

4.3 EMERGING THEMES

The following issues did not relate to the framework used, but were concerns emerging from the South African context.

Many of the participants felt lucky and privileged to be at the university and thought that a degree from this university would almost guarantee them a good job. There was also the

perception that the University of Cape Town was the "best" university in South Africa, a prestigious place to study.

About half the sample reported that they felt support and encouragement from their families for being at the university. The families and relatives of almost all of the participants lived in another part of South Africa. Thus, contact with family members was sporadic. Although half the participants felt that their families were supportive of them, many of them indicated that their families were not educated, and that they knew very little about university life, or the academic demands at the institution. Therefore, there was a feeling that participants could not really share their experiences, their challenges, and their hopes with regard to the university with their families, because their families would simply not comprehend such things.

Some of the participants indicated that they worried about the challenges that their families were facing and that this had affected their studies. There were cases of a mother passing away; of jealousy and rivalry between siblings because the family could only afford to send one sibling to the university; of serious financial problems in the family; and other issues which were not disclosed to the interviewer:

"Because you find that when you come to the university...you are also from the disadvantaged family background, and really some of us [have] got very very serious problems with our families...and you speak to people and you find that...they've got also serious problems or the pressures that is from their family members or something like that...you also find yourself in a situation whereby you can't cope with your work at university."

But the most serious and stressful issue that faced participants was the unrelenting pressure from family members to complete their degree as quickly as possible. Participants reported that family members expected them to find jobs after the completion of their degree and to be the main breadwinners for their families. The high level of stress due to family expectations was also validated in the results of the questionnaire (Figure

10), where family expectations ranked as the highest external source of stress, and fifth highest overall.

Just less than half the sample reported having difficulty with the English language. This challenge affected participants in several ways. They found the lectures difficult to understand because they had to interpret everything in their heads, and thus, they thought that the lecturers were covering the material at too fast a pace. Moreover, it was not only the difference in language that they found a challenge, but also the style of the lecturer:

“Really I don't know, maybe it is because of the way the lecturers lecture...because they've got different styles of lecturing and some of them really, it is difficult for me to understand them, not only because of maybe the language but because of the style they use to lecture.”

The difficulty with the English language also affected participants when they wished to participate in discussions or ask questions. Again, because they had to interpret everything in their heads, it took them a while to formulate their questions or comments in English, and thus, by that time the opportunity had passed them by and the class had moved on to another topic. The lack of language skills also made the assignments they had to write quite a challenge. Participants wished that lecturers would take into account their difficulty when marking their assignments, and not penalize them for their poor command of the English language. Some participants mentioned that they had found the language skills course, offered during ADP, very useful. There was a disparity between the results of the interview and the questionnaire regarding difficulty with the English language. Whereas, in the interviews participants reported in detail about the negative effects of not being proficient in English, in the questionnaire, they reported it to be one of the least sources of stress (Figure 10). Reasons for, and implications of this finding will be examined in the discussion section of the study.

Some of the participants indicated that they had had a very challenging time trying to adjust to city life and the university because they came from small villages in rural areas

of South Africa. It was felt that peer-based mentors would be able to greatly assist with this challenge.

There was also a concern regarding the lack of racial integration of students at the university. Many participants had the perception that the university had racially segregated residence, and they could not understand the reason for this. For some of the participants this was their first opportunity for mixing with and learning from people from other racial backgrounds. In general, the participants thought that the university could do more to integrate students from various racial backgrounds, by organizing more cultural events that would be more inclusive of the African culture. However, participants were cognizant of the challenges facing the university in trying to accommodate for a diverse range of tastes and cultures. A few participants reported that the economic disparity between the black and white students acted as a barrier to racial integration, because they could not afford to do the same social things as the white students could afford.

4.4 MISCELLANEOUS

There were a few significant findings from the results of the questionnaires that were not covered in the interviews. Participants reported high levels of anxiety and stress related to time allotted to exams (Figure 4). The reasons for such feelings were unclear.

Moreover, participants put little value on various university resources, such as the Writing Centre, Vacation Research Programme, and Job Location and Development Programme. These findings were surprising, as participants had reported in the interviews having difficulty with assignments due to language problems, and yet the Writing Centre was reported to be of little value to them. Similarly, in the interviews the participants indicated the importance of finding a job, and yet the Vacation Research Programme, or the Job Location and Development Programme were not valued for this end. It was unclear whether such resources were reported to be of little value due to the participants' lack of knowledge that such resources in fact existed, or that the resources were simply of little assistance.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

In order to understand the meanings of the results obtained in the study, it is important to view them in the context of empowerment. Moreover, note must be made of any emerging patterns or connections between various issues, for a holistic understanding of the results of the study. The ways in which the results from the different sections of the framework are related must be examined and explained. Thus, the following chapter will present a detailed discussion of the results, and their possible ramifications. For the purpose of clarity a similar layout to that of the results section will be maintained.

5.1 DISCUSSION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FRAMEWORK

5.1.1 GROUP-BASED BELIEF SYSTEM

The goals of UCT are to be a multi-disciplinary institution, to be an institution of excellence and relevance, to be a residential university, to maximize the use of information technology, and to be a well-managed university (Strategic Planning Framework, 1997-2000). In the context of the university's vision and mission statement, UCT has stated that it will not "sacrifice quality for expediency...will take excellence as the benchmark for all that we do...ensure enhanced access and success of talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and produce skilled graduates and professionals" (p.6). Further more, UCT expects its qualifiers to be "*effectively literate, effectively numerate and computer literate*, at the appropriate graduate level" (p. 11).

Most of the participants clearly did not identify with the expectations of UCT. A few of the participants reported having read UCT's mission statement and goals, but they were unable to remember its contents. The poor identification with UCT's goals was not due to the lack of understanding, but rather, the lack of internalization of such goals. This maybe due to the fact that the focus of the large majority of the participants was on obtaining a degree from UCT and consequently, finding well-paid jobs. Thus, very few participants

identified studying at UCT as an opportunity to strive for academic excellence. The lack of motivation to strive for academic excellence may be due to several factors.

Firstly, it could be due to UCT's culture and values. Some may argue that UCT does not convey to its students a clear and inspiring vision of aiming for academic excellence. However, if such a statement was true, then it would be expected that all students at UCT, whether black or white or other, to be struggling academically. But this is not so. In general, white students perform better academically than black students. However, it may be argued that UCT has not made any special provisions to specifically familiarize the black student population with its goals and vision.

Secondly, the lack of motivation from participants to aim for academic excellence could be related to environmental factors out of the university's control. For example, many of the participants and their families face serious financial challenges. The aim of obtaining a university degree is to enable participants to financially provide for the family. Thus, under such circumstances black students may find academic excellence an irrelevant goal. With regard to black students at UCT, Leon and Lea point out that "the different life experiences of these students has resulted in them developing different goals and in experiencing the university differently (1988, p. 18).

Thirdly, the reason for the lack of such motivation could be related to intrapsychological factors, such as poor self-concept and low self-efficacy. For example, participants found the academic demands of UCT a difficult challenge. If they should also have low levels of self-efficacy, then it is likely that they will not aim for, or exert effort towards academic excellence.

With regard to UCT's culture, there was concern from participants that there was little room for "black African" expression on campus. Similar findings were presented by Kapp, who argued that language played an important role in the culture of UCT, and consequently, affected students' perceptions of their abilities (1998). Kapp found that those students who were not proficient in the English language found the UCT culture to

be very “white”, “English” and alienating. Furthermore, Kapp points out that English acts as a “social marker and gate keeper” as it excludes those who cannot speak it well from full participation in the institution (p. 21). Participants reported difficulty in effectively participating in the academic aspects at UCT. Examples were given of not understanding lectures, not making comments in lectures and tutorials, and not approaching the ADP coordinator with a difficulty. In non-academic arenas of UCT however, participants did not indicate language to be an issue of concern. This could be due to two factors. Firstly, that in non-academic situations participants may feel free to make use of slang and “lay English” in order to communicate. Such communication styles are usually not tolerated in academic settings. Secondly, in non-academic settings, participants have the choice of communicating in their mother tongue, especially if socialization takes place with students who speak the same language. The dualism of the language issue could possibly explain the discrepancy found in the results, in which participants complained about the negative ramifications of poor language skills, and yet indicated in the questionnaires that such language deficiency caused them low levels of stress.

It must be noted that the components of an institution’s culture are more than its mission statement and goals, its physical structure, and its system of governance. The institution’s members and their relationship with each other also shape the institutional culture. At UCT the participants had some interaction with students from other racial backgrounds, but such interactions were mostly academically, and not socially oriented. In most cases, participants socialized with students from similar racial backgrounds. Moreover, participants had very little contact with the teaching staff, the majority of who were white. Under such circumstances, UCT’s culture was not “inspiring of growth” to the participants. However, as Harris points out, various groups or subcultures can be found within the larger institutional culture (1995). It is within such subcultures that most student socialization takes place, in which members feel a sense of acceptance, and freedom for self-expression. The participants found such an accepting subculture, in which they felt a sense of belonging, at UCT’s residences. It must be noted that the majority of the residences used by the participants accommodated mostly black students. Thus, although the culture of the institution as a whole may not have been inspiring to

participants, they found a sub-culture to which they could relate in one of the university's sections.

Moreover, a culture that is inspiring and empowering to its members must understand the needs of its members and provide the structures and settings that would assist members to successfully achieve their goals. The main goal of the participants was to obtain a degree from UCT. Many of the participants were not aware of all the resources available to them at UCT. Moreover, it was unclear why so few of these resources were made use of by the participants. Similar results were obtained by an earlier study at UCT (Hall et al., 1995).

From the results of the study, it can be said that UCT has failed in two areas of "Group-based Belief System" to provide the clear means by which participants could achieve academic success. The first, is the lack of course counselling, which would normally assist students to plan the number and the name of the courses to be taken each year. This is of special significance to black students as they fail many courses, and thus, may need assistance to re-plan their academic year when they return to register. Such academic planning will have ramifications in other areas of their lives, such as, financial planning for the year, and finding accommodation to suit their financial realities.

The second, is the poor integration between the ADP and the mainstream programme. Participants felt "alone" and "on their own" once they entered the mainstream program. Their academic progress was no longer being monitored, and the relatively heavy workload of the mainstream was found to be a difficult challenge. Moreover, once they entered the mainstream programme, they had to learn to integrate with students from other racial backgrounds, as this was the first opportunity for most of the participants to study with people who were from races other than their own. Clearly, there is poor bridging of the transition made from ADP to the mainstream programme, and consequently, as indicated in Maton and Salem's model, a lack of "clear means" by which participants can achieve the goal of academic success.

Another component of the “Group-based Belief System” was the perceptions that UCT teaching staff were thought to have of participants. Although more than half of the participants thought that UCT staff perceived them as being capable of succeeding in their studies, some felt that there was a general perception that white students were more clever than black students. This made some of the participants doubt their abilities and consequently, they did not participate in class discussions. This reinforces the previous finding in the 1995 UCT study that black students did not ask for assistance during lectures because of the fear of being labelled “problem” black students. Moreover, note must be made of the results that participants thought that only one quarter of UCT’s staff perceived them as a resource to the university. Again, the above point demonstrates the negative perceptions that participants have of their abilities in an institution, the culture of which is perceived to be at variance with their own. If participants think that institutional staff do not value their capabilities and skills, their levels of self-confidence, especially with regard to functioning within an “English” context, may be negatively affected.

Participants’ poor levels of identification with the culture and goals of UCT, and its possible ramifications for negative self-concept, may have contributed to the difficulties they experienced in broadening their loyalties beyond their own race. The fact that most participants perceived a lack of racial integration at social levels at UCT highlights the significance of the above mentioned point. In other words, if black students are to widen their loyalties to include students from races other than their own, they must feel the institution’s tolerance for their culture and values. Moreover, such tolerance should not manifest itself in a section of the university only, namely its residences, but should be present in all its structures and systems, including its members of staff.

5.1.2 OPPORTUNITY ROLE STRUCTURE

Most of the participants had the perception that the university had provided them with many opportunities for roles with various degrees of responsibility. The participants thought that these roles were easily accessible and that the skills they had learnt from such roles were useful, as they could be applied to other arenas of their lives. The

opportunity to be involved in such roles were both formal and informal. Participants had to register or apply for the formal roles, which in many cases resulted in financial gain. Formal roles were, for example, being appointed residential sub-wardens or residential receptionists. Some of the formal roles were made available to participants in the form of jobs both within and outside the institution. In actual fact, the task of the Jobs Opportunity Bureau at UCT is to match available jobs with potential students seeking financial gain.

The informal roles were mostly voluntary and non-remunerative. These were for example, being involved in a club or association, coordinating a study group, and serving on a residential cultural committee. For example, one participant explained how he took it upon himself to create an orderly system of queueing for the residential shuttles, after he had observed the cluttered way in which students waited for the shuttles. He explained that the new system worked, and that other students followed its regulations, and that he felt a deep sense of achievement.

Although there were some examples given by participants of being involved in informal roles, most of the roles were formal ones. In essence, participants were trying to find partial employment to assist them with their financial challenges. This could explain the reason for student's lack of involvement in more academic oriented roles, in which meaningful skills could be learnt for academic success. Roles such as study group coordinators and residential tutors are non-remunerative, but could make significant contributions to learning the necessary skills required for academic success. Stryker explained the concept of identity salience in the context of understanding the behavior of students who hold varying life roles (1968, as cited in Chartrand, 1990). He explained that people's role systems can be hierarchically organized to reflect the importance of each role for the individuals in question, and to predict the probability of certain roles being invoked across certain settings. Furthermore, different roles can be assumed simultaneously without conflict, however, under conditions in which roles are incompatible, the most important role will take precedence. Thus, people are motivated to firstly cater to the most important demands.

It could be argued that the most important need of the participants was to obtain a degree from UCT. To achieve this goal participants had to meet both the academic and the financial challenges facing them. Since both these demands are in conflict, and are not compatible, it can be concluded that participants chose the most salient role, which provided them with financial gain. In other words, participants became more involved in formal and remunerative roles, as opposed to informal and more academically oriented roles, possibly because of pressing financial challenges.

Whatever the case may be, participants had positive perceptions of the numerous types of roles available to them, and the impact that such involvement had had on their self-efficacy and self-confidence. Moreover, these roles had acted as a channel through which participants had become more involved within the institution.

5.1.3 SUPPORT SYSTEM

The support system at UCT was perceived by participants to be encompassing, in that a wide variety of support structures existed, which were both formal and informal. The formal support structures were, for example, the computer facilities, the tutorial services, the ADP orientation, the Careers Centre, and the counselling service, to mention a few. Although most participants found the computer facilities, the tutorial services, and the ADP orientation valuable, note must be made that only half of the participants felt that the support structures at UCT met their needs. This finding indicates that either UCT is not aware of the needs of its black students, and thus, has not planned empowering mechanisms accordingly, or that it is aware of the needs, but it does not possess the required resources to meet such needs.

One of the most pressing needs reported by participants was the need for financial assistance. Participants' perceptions were that the financial assistance provided by UCT was not adequate to meet their needs, especially after the first year of study. It must be

recognized that this is an extensive challenge, with far-reaching ramifications. However, to a large extent this challenge is beyond the university's control. The conditions of deprivation which the system of apartheid encouraged, and its special significance with regard to the poor education received by most black South Africans, means that today many black South Africans live in poverty, and have thus left this legacy, with all its ramifications, to the next generation.

Some aspects of the ADP were perceived to be useful by participants, but the perception was that it did not prepare them well enough for the mainstream programme. From the results it is clear that participants felt that they needed special attention and monitoring, similar to those received in ADP, until the completion of their degree. This raises an interesting issue. On the one hand, UCT is aware of the fact that many of its black students come from disadvantaged educational backgrounds, and has therefore, tried to put into place empowering interventions such as the ADP. To a large extent such programmes, with their inherent monitoring and nurturing characteristics, encourage students to be dependent on the system, as opposed to being self-sufficient. On the other hand, students from disadvantaged educational systems were taught at school to be dependent on teaching staff, and not to question the views of authority. Taking cognizance of this fact, UCT also wants to teach its students to be independent. In essence, UCT wants to empower its black students to take responsibility for their academic standing, but it also needs to nurture these same students to meet certain academic standards, the process of which can cause academic dependency. Attention must be paid to the above issues when planning for empowering interventions.

Some of the participants complained that the ADP carried with it a negative stigma, and that due to its inherent design to assist students from academically disadvantaged backgrounds, it encouraged racial segregation. This is a sensitive issue, which may have implications for students' self-concept and perceived abilities. It can be argued that due to the inequalities perpetuated in South Africa's recent history, large numbers of black students may still doubt their abilities and competencies. Therefore, any empowering

intervention must be sensitive to this issue, and must assist in reversing such erroneously held beliefs.

Another significant finding of the study was the low value which participants placed on a section of the formal support structure: namely, the formal counselling systems. Even though the participants reported high levels of stress due to academic, social and financial pressures, they found little value in the counselling systems, because very few of them made use of such systems. This could be due to several factors. One may be the negative stigma attached to seeking counselling. Participants may have wished to avoid being potentially perceived by other students as weak or dependent, especially if they valued the opinions of their peers, and found it a challenge to make friends. Another reason may be that participants were not accustomed to seek guidance and assistance in their schools, as such services were given low priority in the allocation of resources. Instead, participants were turning to their peers for assistance. Possibly, due to the similarity in age range, shared ethnicity, and common goals and challenges, participants could better relate to their peers, and share concerns.

Maton and Salem describe such peer-base support system as critical within the larger structure. Friendships and peer-based support were reported by participants to be greatly valued, especially for sharing problems of personal or emotional nature. However, such peer-based support was not present as such in the academic arena. A large majority of the participants indicated their need and desire to be involved in study groups, a non-threatening environment in which they could ask questions and make comments. Some participants indicated that UCT should make such study groups mandatory. Such comments demonstrate the degree to which some black students are fully dependent on formal support structures, and lack the perception and initiative to take control of their academic challenges.

Related to peer-based study groups is the topic of peer-based mentors. The large majority of the participants reported the need for such a support system. The aim of peer mentoring is " to assist the new student to negotiate the critical adjustment challenges of

the new milieu with its complexity of norms, values, rituals and expectations by providing an accessible, safe and nurturing support person, the peer mentor, who has already successfully struggled the struggle" (Kagee, Naidoo & Mahatey, 1997, p.250). Moreover, Jacobi argues that the literature on this topic generally indicates that participation in mentoring programmes can assist students who may be "at risk", to graduate (1991, as cited in Kagee et al., 1997). The unique role that peer mentors can play in the South African context is highlighted as assisting students to cope with diversity of race, lifestyles, perceptions and beliefs at the grassroots (Kagee et al., 1997). This seems particularly relevant to the circumstances at UCT, as participants reported low levels of racial integration at social levels.

Moreover, the most valuable component of a mentoring programme may be the unique relationship that is created between the mentor and the mentee, as it is the relationship that provides the milieu in which the mentee feels a sense of support (Kagee et al., 1997). If black students feel alienated by the culture of UCT, peer mentors would potentially be able to create a positive climate in which students may find motivation to strive for academic success. Moreover, mentors can provide support with personal issues that black students would find difficult to share with staff from formal counselling systems. Finally, mentors could be role models, who could show black students how to make the transition from dependence on the institution to self-sufficiency and academic responsibility. Kagee and his colleagues caution not to plan such a mentoring system for "at risk" students only, as it will create a negative stigma. They emphasize that participation in such a programme must be voluntary. UCT would do well to take note of the positive contributions that such a system of support could potentially make, and to further note that such a system is at present sorely lacking at the institution.

The overwhelming majority of the participants reported feeling a sense of community at UCT. This finding is at variance from the findings of Leon and Lea (1988), and Hall, Rex and Sutherland (1995) who found that black students at UCT did not feel a sense of belonging, but rather, felt alienated. Feeling a sense of community was related to three factors: friendships, residential life, and teaching staff. As reported in the results the

residences provide more than accommodation to students. They are centres of social activity, where friendships are formed and feelings of “belonging” are created amongst students. This was especially true of small residences, in which all members knew each other and thus, functioned as a family. It must be noted, however, that socialization took place at the expense of studying, as many participants reported that the residences were too noisy and chaotic for studying.

Nettles (1991) has referred to the sense of community achieved through satisfactory engagement with faculty as “academic integration”. He explains that academic integration is dependent on the perception that students hold of university faculty being sensitive to students’ needs, interests and aspirations; the ease with which they engage with staff at a personal level; the perception of students that the staff are capable teachers; and the satisfaction of students with the quality of education received at the university. It is unfortunate that participants reported that their engagement with academic staff was very poor. Participants did not approach lecturers for academic reasons, much less personal ones. Thus, a close and nurturing relationship is clearly missing between the participants and the teaching staff. In this context, participants felt alienated at UCT, but in the context of residential life and friends, they felt a sense of belonging. It is noteworthy to mention that the sense of community and belonging was based purely on social aspects, and was divorced from identifying with the institution as an academic.

5.1.4 LEADERSHIP

The university's leadership was not a source of empowerment to the participants. Only nineteen percent of the participants felt inspired by the university's leadership. This was due to several factors.

Firstly, the majority of the teaching staff at UCT are white. Participants felt that they did not share "common significant life experiences" with the teaching staff, as well as the ADP Coordinator. In essence, the perceptions of the participants were that the white staff knew very little about the kind of life and challenges that participants faced. To the

participants, this meant that the staff could not understand issues from the participants' point of view, nor could they offer any empathy. Thus, there were very few opportunities in which participants could identify with role models from the same racial backgrounds. Moreover, the majority of participants had very little contact with the teaching staff. This is a serious issue, as contact with teaching staff outside the classroom is related to better academic performance (Nettles, 1991). Moreover, an active interaction between members of staff and participants could potentially encourage a stronger formation of an academic identity in participants, and a better identification with the university's academic goals.

Secondly, the possible reasons for participants' poor perceptions of UCT's leadership, could be due to the "teaching style" of the university staff, which is at variance with that of their high school. Students in general are expected to show comparatively more initiative and responsibility for their studies once at university. Thus, students' academic progress may not be monitored in detail, students may be expected to take the responsibility to read widely in order to broaden their understanding of various subjects, and to present critical thinking in their analysis of the material. However the educational approach in former DET schools greatly vary with that of UCT. In most cases, students were encouraged to rote-learn rather than understand the material, to be obedient to members of staff and not to question authority, and to be "spoon-fed" the required academic material. Such a vast change in teaching styles may have lead participants to perceive the teaching staff as uncommitted to the participants.

Thirdly, it is possible that the teaching staff may be facing challenges of their own. They may be overburdened with work, and thus, do the minimum that is required of them. If this should be the case, little time may be available to the teaching staff to give special attention to students in need, and to cater for their development, and to encourage active participation in the institution. Moreover, staff may benefit from diversity training, especially due to the fact that the racial composition of the student body at UCT has changed drastically in the past few years. Such potential challenges experienced by members of staff, may have contributed to the participants' perceptions of leaders' lack of commitment to the participants.

5.2 GENERAL DISCUSSION

The assessment of UCT's structural empowering mechanisms show that black students are provided with a pervasive, accessible, and multifunctional role structure, which enables them to become active participants within the institution, to learn new skills and responsibilities, and to feel a sense of competence and achievement as a result. UCT's support system was perceived to be encompassing, and provided a sense of belonging to participants. However, the support system could be more peer-based oriented, and certainly more academically directed. The belief system and the leadership were, on the whole, ineffective in empowering participants.

It is important to note that if UCT's goal is to empower its black students to perform better academically, it must examine all four components of its empowering structural mechanisms, and must ensure that each one is fully effective. The framework with its four components can be compared to a delicate machinery, all of whose elements must be functional in order to obtain satisfactory results. Thus, structural empowerment will not be a reality at UCT until all four areas of concern effectively address the needs of the black student population.

Furthermore, it should be noted that to some degree serious issues such as financial challenges and poor educational backgrounds will set the stage on which black students will attempt to obtain tertiary education. Such challenges are beyond the sphere of the university, and little can be done to alleviate them in the short-term. There is no doubt that such issues influence black students' university experiences, but ultimately, the individual must bear the responsibility for academic achievement.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

- The support structures at UCT may be encompassing, but do not fully meet the needs of black students. A number of formal systems which are supposed to empower black students seem to be of little value, such as the counselling services, whereas, informal structures, such as peer-based support played critical roles in the face of challenges experienced by black students. Although friendships were reported to be of great value to participants, they were not academically oriented, and did not encourage academic excellence. In actual fact, at times friendships eclipsed the importance of exertion to study.
- Peer-based programmes of support, such as mentorship, may be of value in creating a culture of learning and academic excellence amongst black students. A consultative approach is needed in order to design effective empowering interventions for the black student population at UCT. It is critical to explore and identify the needs of this group of students through joint consultation, before planning any empowering mechanisms.
- The culture and values, and the leadership of UCT are not empowering of the black student population. Although participants felt a sense of community at UCT, it was mostly in the context of the residences, and not the institution as a whole. A more accepting and encouraging culture for black students is needed, together with the placement of competent black teaching staff throughout the institution. Moreover, the vision and goals of UCT for its student population were

very vague to participants, and may need to be communicated more clearly to this group of students.

- UCT's role structure is encompassing and provides for varying levels of responsibility. It is a channel through which participants become more involved in the institution, and consequently, learn new skills, feel a sense of competence and achievement, and also benefit from some financial gain. Thus, UCT's role structure has contributed in a positive way to the participants' self- concept, and has to some degree empowered them.
- The serious financial challenges which many of the participants are faced with, dictates priorities and assigns relevance to issues. Thus, the mind- set of the participants is to pass courses and to obtain a degree in order to find a well-paid job. Such a job is perceived to enable participants to meet their financial challenges. Therefore, financial needs override striving for academic excellence.
- Tertiary educational systems have unique components and structures. The assessment of such a system, with its inherent complexity, will benefit from the use of a general framework. The framework used in this study was specific, and assisted to focus attention on the structural aspects of empowerment at UCT. A framework that would encompass other aspects of empowerment would be of special value, as it could provide the means to understand student perceptions and issues in a more comprehensive way. Moreover, such a framework could possibly explain the interactions and their ramifications between the student body, the staff and the institution as a whole.
- The links between the questionnaire and the interview protocol could have been made stronger, thereby, adding internal validity to the study, and exploring issues of concern in more depth.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- UCT may wish to examine the process by which it passes on its vision and goals to its black students. In essence, UCT needs to make its goals and vision palpable for its black student population. Black students' sense of academic identity and identification with UCT's goals and vision can be improved through the use of peer-base mentors and more effective engagement with academic staff. The mentors and the staff are in essence the people who will have the opportunity to pass on the vision to the students, as they are the ones who have direct contact with the student body.
- It would be valuable to devise better coordination of more accurate information regarding university challenges and expectations with the secondary educational institutions, especially ex-DET schools. Information such as regulations of financial assistance, levels of academic requirements, and the expectations of university life will be useful in assisting students to plan their tertiary education carefully.
- UCT may wish to examine ways in which it can make more room for "African" expressions at the institution, whether it be more cultural events, offering certain courses in some of the African languages, or ensuring that its teaching staff are more racially representative of its student composition. It will also be beneficial for UCT to devise plans that would encourage higher degrees of racial integration, especially at social levels.
- With regard to specific support structures, a system of course counselling seems to be needed, which may be of significant value to black students in planning their academic and financial course of action. Moreover, the transition from ADP to mainstream programmes needs special attention to ensure that a smooth transition takes place. Note should also be made of the negative stigma that is attached to the ADP, and possible solutions to remedy this challenge should be explored.

- A system of peer-based mentors should be set up to teach students the knowledge and skills needed to function well at university and to achieve academic success. Such a system could encourage black students to aim for academic excellence, to internalize UCT's goals and vision, and to potentially boost black students' perceptions of self-efficacy and self-competence. Moreover, mentors could to some extent address black students' concerns, as the formal counselling services at UCT were reported to be of little value to the participants. The poor levels of family support, the challenging transition of rural to urban life, and the difficulties of racial integration at social levels experienced by participants could all potentially be addressed through the use of peer-based mentors. It must be noted, however, that if such a programme is to avoid the attachment of negative stigma, it must be on voluntary basis.
- Although UCT does not have to be responsible for setting up a system of study-groups, it can certainly encourage the formation of such support structures, by educating black students, especially in the first year of their study, about such groups and their functioning. Potential study-group coordinators can be identified by the teaching staff, who could be encouraged to take the initiative to form study-groups.
- Finally, it would be valuable for UCT to examine its leadership, both formal and informal, and assess its challenges and needs within the institution, and devise effective measures to empower its leaders to be more inspirational and committed to students in general and to the setting as well. The recruitment of competent black teaching staff is also recommended.

6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study had several limitations. It was beyond the scope of the study to examine the intrapsychological factors, which no doubt play an important role in the way students perceive themselves and their experiences. Factors such as self-motivation, self-efficacy, and self-competence are very relevant to the issues examined in this study.

Moreover, the relatively small sample size makes it difficult to generalize the findings to black students in other faculties. It should also be noted that the ADP in the Commerce Faculty is different from the ADP in other Faculties, and thus, results regarding the functioning of the ADP will vary across Faculties.

The study relied on self-reported data, which is not the most reliable method for data collection. Participants may have wished to please the interviewer, or hidden some unpleasant aspects regarding themselves, and may have tailored their answers to accommodate such wishes.

Cognizance must be taken of the fact that the study was based on factors examined in the present. With the passing of time, conditions may change, and thus the results of the study may not be applicable or relevant anymore.

Finally, in order to have a holistic perception of the issues at play, it is important to examine and understand the same issues from the perspective of UCT's academic as well as administrative staff. It was beyond the scope of this study to do this.

6.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research is needed in several areas. It is important to gain insight into the perceptions of UCT's administrative and teaching staff, to examine their challenges, and to understand to what degree their needs are met by the institution. This knowledge will provide a more comprehensive picture of the interplay between the factors that affect black student academic achievement.

A more comprehensive model to examine empowerment is needed for tertiary institutions in South Africa. Such a model will have to take account of not only the structural factors that affect black student empowerment, but also the intrapsychic components with their ramifications for student motivation, self-efficacy and self-concept. Such a comprehensive model must also take cognizance of the cultural differences and needs of black student education in both secondary and tertiary settings.

Finally, a longitudinal study will be helpful to examine the effects that any empowering interventions may in actual fact have on black students. Such a method of study can be both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

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APPENDIX 1: MATON AND SALEM'S FRAMEWORK

University of Cape Town

Organizational Characteristics Common to Empowering Community Settings

<i>GROUP-BASED BELIEF SYSTEM</i>	<i>OPPORTUNITY ROLE STRUCTURE</i>	<i>SUPPORT SYSTEM</i>	<i>LEADERSHIP</i>
INSPIRES GROWTH	PERVASIVE	ENCOMPASSING	INSPIRATIONAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salient goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple domains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear means 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role model
STRENGTH-BASED	HIGHLY ACCESSIBLE	PEER-BASED	TALENTED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All have capability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varying demands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide and receive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonally
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members-as-resource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizationally
BEYOND SELF	MULTIFUNCTIONAL	SENSE OF COMMUNITY	SHARED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use and develop skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beyond group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varying responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beyond setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to expansion
			COMMITTED
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To setting
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To members

Maton and Salem (1995).

APPENDIX 2: TABLES OF DATA

University of Cape Town

DATA FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

Responses	strongly disagree	disagree	uncertain	agree	strongly agree	N
	1	2	3	4	5	
A1 The teaching staff believe I have the capability to succeed	0	1	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1	16
A2 The administrators believe I have the capability to succeed	0	0	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1	16
A3 I am viewed as a valuable resource to the university by the teaching staff.	0	1	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 3	1 1 1 1	0	16

A4 I am viewed as a valuable resource to the university by the administrators.	0	1 1	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 1		
	0	2	9	5	0	16
A5 The university encourages me to think more widely about my studies	0	1 1 1	1 1 1	1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	
	0	3	3	6	4	16
A6 There are many other roles for students to play besides being a student	0	1	1	1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 1 1	
	0	1	1	6	8	16
A7 I have learnt a great deal from playing roles other than a student	0	1	1 1	1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 1	
	0	1	2	6	6	15

A18 The ADP has been useful & prepared me for the mainstream B Com degree	1	1 1 1	1 1 1	1 1 1	1 1 1 1 1	16
A19 I would find it helpful to be part of a study group	0	1	1	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2	1 1 1 1	16
A20 I feel I have the writing skills needed to do well in a B Com	0	1	1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1	16
A21 I feel I have the analytical skills needed to do well in a B Com	0	0	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	16

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

University of Cape Town

Student Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain a better understanding of the experiences of students at the University of Cape Town. Many of the questions ask about your relationship with peers, lecturers and family members. There are also questions about your attitudes and beliefs about various social and cultural issues.

It is important that you answer each question as accurately and honestly as possible, as your responses are important to the investigation of the various factors that contribute to the success of students at the University of Cape Town. Your responses will remain confidential. Thank you for participating in this study.

Name:

Age:

Year of Study:

Do you stay in residence? If not, which type of accommodation do you have?

What is your first language?

What is your preferred language of communication?

Where were you born? (please indicate city or town and province)

Where did you go to high school?

What is the occupation of your parents?

Using the following scale below, please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: (Circle appropriate number. Mark an NA besides questions that do not apply to you.)

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	uncertain	agree	strongly agree

1. I feel that I am viewed by the university teaching staff as having the capability to succeed in my studies.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

2. I feel that I am viewed by the university administrators as having the capability to succeed in my studies.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

3. I feel that I am viewed by the university teaching staff as a valuable resource to the university.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

4. I feel that I am viewed by the university administrators as a valuable resource to the university

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

5. The university of Cape Town encourages me to think more widely than my studies.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

6. At the university, there are many other roles for students to play besides being a student.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

7. I have learnt a great deal from my experience of playing other roles than that of a student at the university.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

8. From my above mentioned experience, I can apply what I have learnt to other situations in my life.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

9. These "other roles" are easily available or accessible at the university.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

10. The support system at the University of Cape Town addresses my needs.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

11. My peers (other students) are supportive of me.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

12. I feel that I can play a supportive role for other students.
1 2 3 4 5

13. I feel a sense of community or belonging at the University of Cape Town.
1 2 3 4 5

14. I have one or more mentors (people that you look up to, who have achieved success, and who are able and willing to guide you) at the university.
1 2 3 4 5

15. I think that I can at a later date be a mentor to some students at the University of Cape Town.
1 2 3 4 5

Please answer the following two questions by writing in your answer clearly:

16. If you have a mentor at the university, please describe what makes that person so special to you.

17. What things would help you to be a mentor at the University of Cape Town?

18. The Academic Development Programme has been useful and has prepared me for the mainstream Bachelor of Commerce degree.
1 2 3 4 5

19. I would find it helpful to be part of a study-group.
1 2 3 4 5

20. I feel that I have the writing skills needed to do well in the B.Commerce programme.
1 2 3 4 5

21. I feel that I have the analytical skills (making sense of information) needed to do well in the B. Commerce programme.
1 2 3 4 5

Please rate the extent to which each factor listed below is a source of stress in your courses, using the following scale: (please circle appropriate number)

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all Stressful		Moderately stressful		Extremely stressful
1. Lectures				1 2 3 4 5
2. Course content				1 2 3 4 5
3. Difficulty with the English language				1 2 3 4 5
4. Exams				1 2 3 4 5
5. Faculty accessibility				1 2 3 4 5
6. Perceived fairness of faculty				1 2 3 4 5
7. Time allotted for exams				1 2 3 4 5
8. Finding enough time to study				1 2 3 4 5
9. Isolation from other students				1 2 3 4 5
10. Amount of course reading or homework				1 2 3 4 5
11. Test anxiety				1 2 3 4 5
12. Adequacy of previous academic preparation				1 2 3 4 5
13. Financial challenges				1 2 3 4 5
14. Family expectations				1 2 3 4 5
15. University campus				1 2 3 4 5
16. Residential life (if applicable)				1 2 3 4 5
17. Deciding on which courses would be most appropriate to do				1 2 3 4 5
18. Feeling like you fit in				1 2 3 4 5
19. Not enough contact with faculty				1 2 3 4 5
20. Balancing time between different course demands				1 2 3 4 5
21. Feeling comfortable to ask questions				1 2 3 4 5
22. Other-----				1 2 3 4 5

Using the scale below, please indicate the degree to which the following aspects of your university have been helpful in your experience as a student: (circle appropriate number)

	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	Not at all helpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful	Very helpful	extremely helpful	Not applicable/ Not used
1. Social interactions with students of other racial backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5	NA
2. Interactions with faculty in your major courses	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3. Interaction with university administrators	1	2	3	4	5	NA
4. Financial Support from the university	1	2	3	4	5	NA
5. Academic advising	1	2	3	4	5	NA
6. Personal counselling from faculty or staff	1	2	3	4	5	NA
7. Personal counselling at the Student Guidance and Counseling	1	2	3	4	5	NA
8. Personal counselling at the Student Health Services	1	2	3	4	5	NA
9. Medical attention or medication at Student Health Services	1	2	3	4	5	NA
10. Support with regard to racial harassment	1	2	3	4	5	NA
11. Support with regard to sexual harassment	1	2	3	4	5	NA
12. Training in computers at the Student Learning Center	1	2	3	4	5	NA
13. Use of computer facilities	1	2	3	4	5	NA
14. Sports and recreational facilities	1	2	3	4	5	NA
15. Vacation research and training programme	1	2	3	4	5	NA
16. Work study programme	1	2	3	4	5	NA
17. Job location and development programme	1	2	3	4	5	NA
18. University clubs or associations	1	2	3	4	5	NA
19. UCT radio programme	1	2	3	4	5	NA
20. UCT newspaper	1	2	3	4	5	NA
21. University orientation programme	1	2	3	4	5	NA
22. Residential orientation programme (if applicable)	1	2	3	4	5	NA
23. Student disability Unit	1	2	3	4	5	NA
24. Cultural / social activities sponsored by the university	1	2	3	4	5	NA
25. Networking opportunities at the university	1	2	3	4	5	NA
26. Tutorial services at the university	1	2	3	4	5	NA
27. The Writing Centre	1	2	3	4	5	NA
28. Careers Office	1	2	3	4	5	NA
29. Other-----	1	2	3	4	5	NA

University of Cape Town